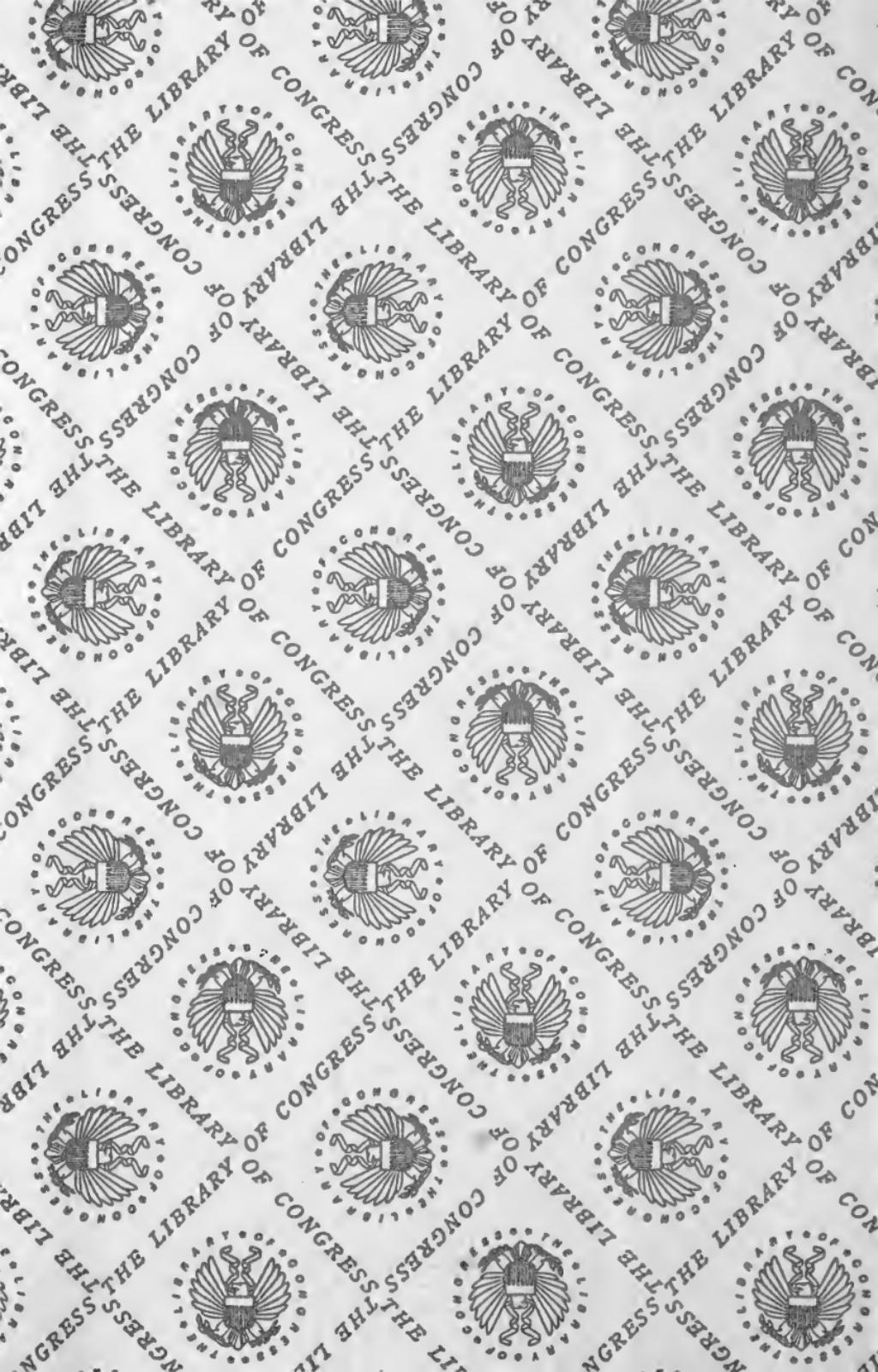
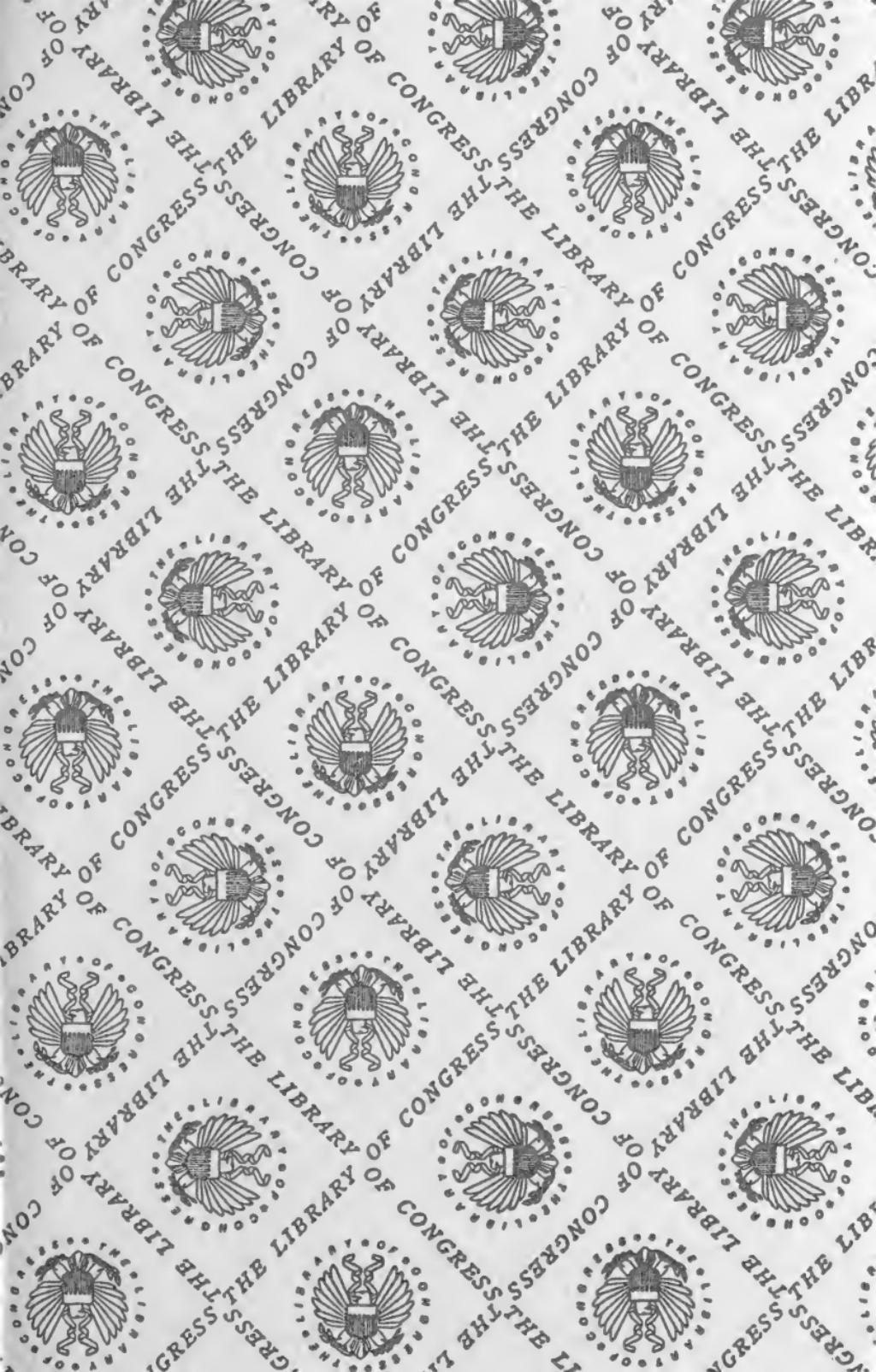


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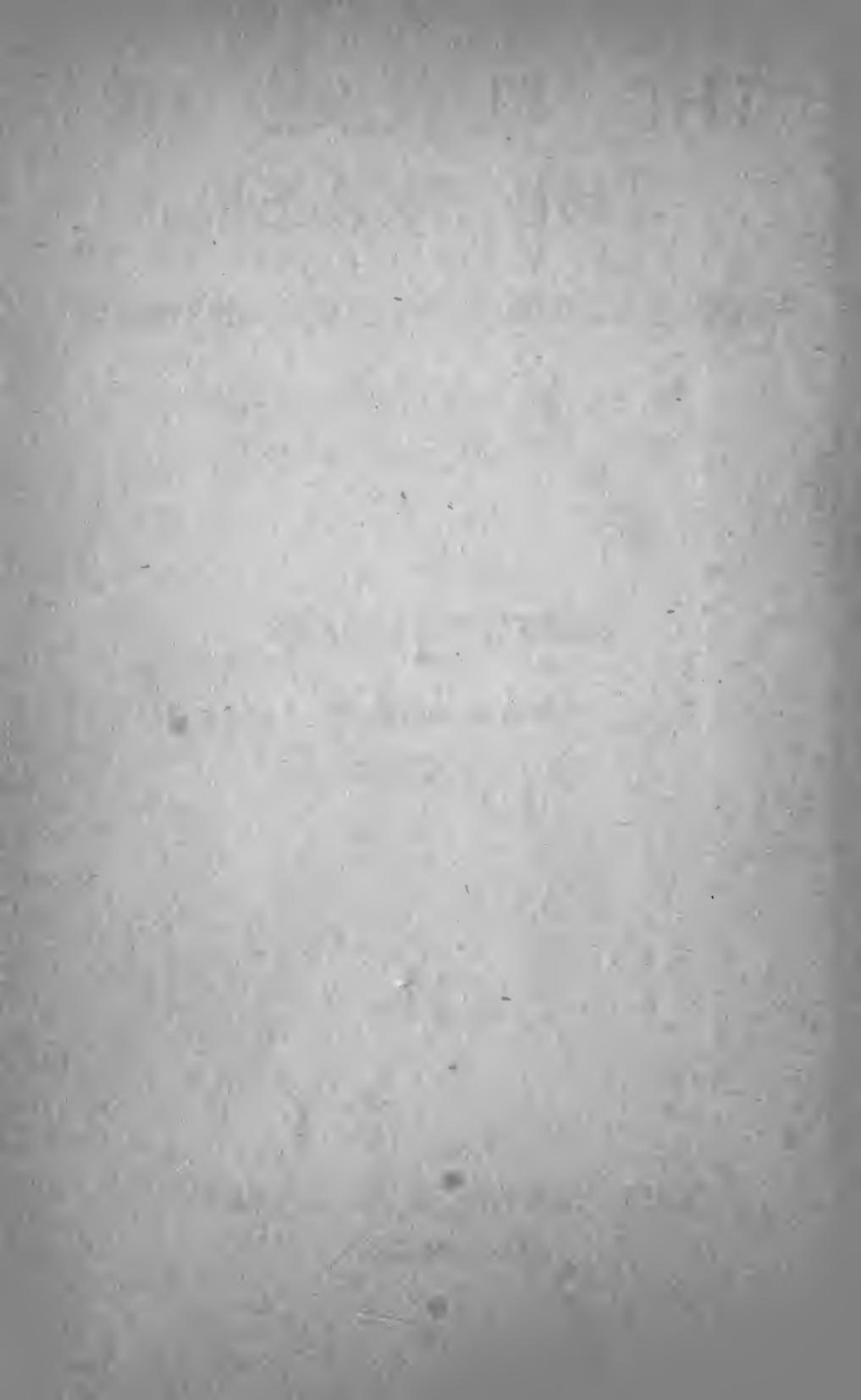








THE FUTURE OF THE NOVEL



THE FUTURE OF THE NOVEL

FAMOUS AUTHORS ON THEIR METHODS

A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS
WITH RENOWNED AUTHORS

CONDUCTED BY

MEREDITH STARR

¹⁶

With a Preamble by

W. H. CHESSON

BOSTON :

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY,
PUBLISHERS.

PR82b
S7

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*Printed in Great Britain by Love & Malcomson, Ltd.,
London and Redhill.*

Published for the first time in 1921

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PREFACE

THE majority of these interviews originally appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and I take this opportunity of thanking the Editor for permission to reprint them in book form.

The task of arranging the contributions in an order of merit or even according to the popularity of the authors would prove a task far more difficult than useful. The present order is therefore justifiably fortuitous.

I may mention that each interview contains the actual words of the author interviewed, and that in no instance have I presumed to alter or add to the original pronouncement.

Since the Great Upheaval which began in 1914 the face of the world has been completely changed. And whatever the future may bring forth, we may be certain of one thing: we shall never return to the conditions which obtained before the war. Literature, as well as everything else, is in the melting-pot. New developments will arise in every form of art, because new ideals will inspire the creative artists

who will build up a new synthesis from the débris of a shattered world.

Under these circumstances, the views of renowned authors on the future of the novel will attract more than a passing interest, both among the reading and the writing public. For the novel has become an indispensable feature in the national life, and, as such, must inevitably survive. But it is difficult to say in what direction it will develop, and for this reason the opinions of those who are acknowledged masters in their sphere are fraught with an added significance.

MEREDITH STARR.

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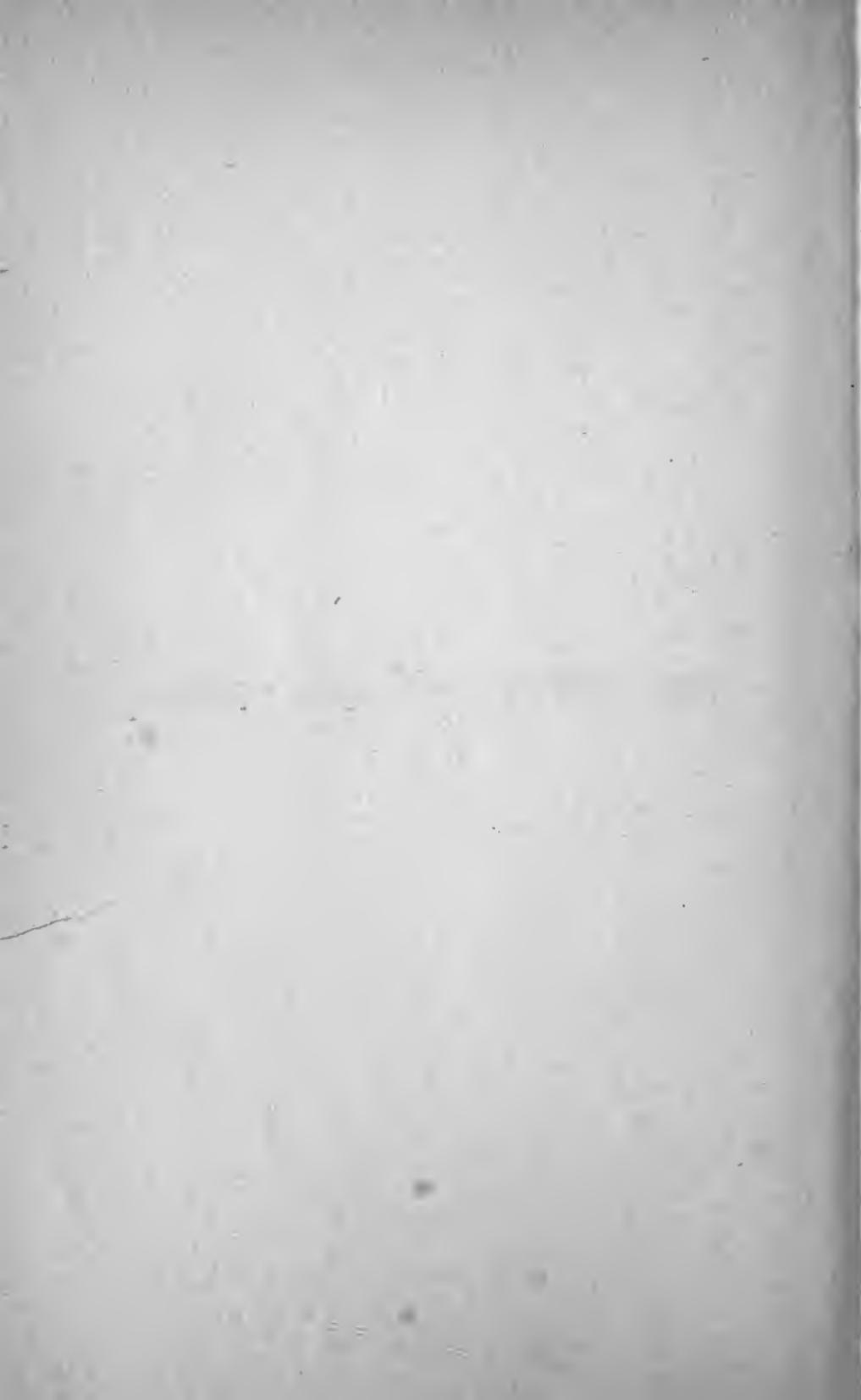
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THE FUTURE OF THE NOVEL



THE FUTURE OF THE NOVEL

PREAMBLE

BY W. H. CHESSON

NEEDLESS to say, I am not here to introduce the brilliant gathering who have written and spoken their thoughts about the Novel, partly in response to an inquiry conducted by Mr. Meredith Starr, at the request of the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The gathering does not include all the favourite fictionists of contemporary England, but it is highly representative of literary success in the fields of imagination. Not only has Mr. Starr succeeded in eliciting opinion from the famous, such as Mr. Alfred Noyes and Lucas Malet (that finest flower of the Kingsley artistry), but also from the typical ; not only from those who (like Mr. W. E. Norris) have contrived to remain elegant and conventional in the midst of improbabilities, but also from the ultra-modern and the studiously plausible.

A critic malevolently accused of meandering when in truth he is not going the shortest way from A to Z, is in a pitiful predicament ; and yet I cannot pass by Mr. Starr's list of contributors without a few remarks of questionable relevance. The first

thought which occurs to me on folding my hands reverently before the phantom of success evoked by the mere sound of their names is that, despite the fact that every competent literary critic is, *ipso facto*, a creator, the world has nothing to offer its professional critics of fiction one quarter as good from a mercenary viewpoint as falls to the lot of a popular storyteller. In the commercial sense of the word, there is no such being as a very popular literary critic, and owing to hypocrisy, the idolatory of "tone," the cult of delicacy, the critic who functions in a "reputable" newspaper finds that, in minding his p's and q's, he has to be pretty careful of the rest of the alphabet as well. That urbane proverb, *Live and let live*, sounds again and again a knell over unborn criticism, though, in so mixed a world as ours, teaching people what and how to enjoy is almost, if not quite, inextricably involved in teaching them what to eliminate, ignore and destroy. Here and there a critic, terribly armed by Minerva against duncery like Churton Collins, or clothed in sheet lightnings like Chesterton, or a superbly verberant Know-all of Art like Huneker, compels even Dulness to feel that the man looking intelligently at a deed or a dream is sometimes at least as considerable as the doer or dreamer. Critics so vigorous and inspired cannot be caged in journalism; their vitality flows inevitably into books, and if criticism were their only forte they would still achieve fame. But there is scarcely a fictionist of commercial value to booksellers who has not reason to laugh or cry (according as he is controlled by amusement or pity) at the working life of a literary critic living solely by his journalistic contributions; for though such a critic print every day a cynicism worthy of La Rochefoucauld, a sublimity worthy of Pascal, a subtlety worthy of Henry James, no pearl or jewel that his lips may drop on the pavement of Grub

Street will serve as an impediment to his uneasy progress towards Limbo.

The book's the thing ! A book is commonly secure from the fair domesticated maid who lays fires, and the fact that even an average novelist brings out books gives him a place in the sun rather than a place in the grate. True, there is something absurd about the prestige attaching to bulk and physical separateness. One smiles to reflect that "Dagmar's Pink Jumper" by Phyllis Grovvell (assuming the existence of such a work) would inevitably appear in the general catalogue of our greatest public library, whereas if D. Albert Einstein, Signor Gabriele D'Annunzio, President Harding and Sir Robertson Nicoll were simultaneously to contribute to a number of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, no member of the illustrious quartet would have qualified thereby for a reference in that cosmic work. Again I say the book's the thing. And since it is the thing, how pleasing it is to reflect that the easiest kind of book to write is also the one most likely to sell !

Money has been called Power : even an obolus in a dead man's mouth has been deemed efficacious. Certainly a penny dropped in the street causes more people to look down than thunder causes to look up. This Power one is glad to see in the possession of every good writer. It indulges the critic in an occasional pair of shoes ; for the novelist it purchases a motor car. Why this difference ?

There is a single answer : Popularity, which is another word for love. The only people who love critics *qua* critics, are those whom they helpfully or approvingly criticise, but popular novelists are loved by thousands whom they have never seen.

I draw on my experience for two illustrations of the novelist's place in the heart of humanity. Among the most impressive and convincing contributions to this book is one by Mr. Robert Hichens.

He is probably the greatest living English master of what I may term Hot House Fiction. The circumstantial form of his work sometimes attains surprising beauty, for he is a cunning artist, and he charms by the creation and solution of dreadful mysteries, and by the sympathetic exhibition of souls in pain and of desires that rum and venery have never found the mouths of. "The Fruitful Vine," one of his most inspired works, was nominated a few years ago for a cheap edition which could only be made to pay at the price to its verbiage of a drastic abridgment. A quarter of a century of criticism published in papers, of private memoranda on thousands of MSS. had not set me in a position whence I could safely refuse the task of pruning the too expansive creeper. I, therefore, performed the veritable "hack" work required of me, but though I left Mr. Hichens' main narrative intact, and was entrusted with other abridgments, a talented lady novelist (a friend of mine, too !) was heard to express the wish to murder the anonymous (involuntarily anonymous) gardener. For me, of course, there was a taste of irony in my achievement. Infinitely humaner than Procrustes, I had nevertheless qualified, like those fearsome beings who "make up" a daily paper, for a rhetorical link with him, and I asked myself, as I did when I turned some of Shakespeare's plays into tales for children, if it wasn't ten thousand times more blessed to cut down daddy's old trousers into knickerbockers, than to alter another man's art at the bidding of commercial expediency.

The sound of Gertrude Page's voice in this book is the cause of my second illustration of the power of novel-writing to elevate a person above Grub Street and the melancholy jealousies and economies of "staffs" and publishing offices. In my early manhood, she, a girl brimful of dreams of love worth loving and life worth struggling in, regarded me as

a possible guide to acceptance. Long and meticulous were the criticisms I wrote to her on her performances. She saw me on a hill and knew not that its name was Illusion—the hill that flattens itself. At length she qualified for a favourable report by my late friend Lewis Sergeant, a man of extraordinary scholarship and keen perception, whose verdict should have been effective in the House where it was made. Alas, it was not. The lady whose “Paddy the Next Best Thing” has equalled or exceeded the popularity of Mrs. Hungerford’s “Molly Bawn,” arrived at success by a road of which I saw but the beginning. When she was so successful that publishers and managers of theatres and cinemas looked at her reverently as at a personification of acquirable cash, I was, in an interview ungraced by any compliment, severing connection with a publisher who had known me for thirty years because he “insisted” on a daily attendance at 9 a.m. for less than a pound a day. Look on this picture and then on that. The idle apprentice and the industrious apprentice have served long enough. Let a new Hogarth arise and depict the critic and the novelist.

And now as a critic it behoves me to consider what the passion for stories means in human life and the development of humanity. There are four great forces behind most human beings—aspiration, love, appetite, fear. There are two kinds of life in which they can operate—the life called real and the life of imagination. On that plane of consciousness called real life, where man is awake, perceives cause and effect and accurately foresees the physical results of rules, aspiration calls for toil, love implies self-denial and fear is more potent than mud to defile souls whom it is forced to approach when they yearn towards the absolutes of perfection. To realise the

ideal, to bring it down from heaven and make his hands and feet its instruments, is a task which may well daunt a sensualist, by whom I mean anybody whose real life is the history of one or more physical appetites. For if a man begin to view his self of physical appetites and fear as the substance out of which the ideal is required to emerge, he may—psychic artist that he has become—seize Pain as the analogue of the sculptor's chisel and bid the fragments fly.

Who lets *I dare not thwart I would* may posture all through life (if he be silly enough) in the studio of his unborn ideal, or he may go forth and spoil his complexion by stupefying pleasures. But he can also do this: he can steadily apply himself to the occupation of living in successful and happy people, saints diademed by their own light, conquerors of fear whom no hurricane can blow from rectitude—yes, and in people of unascertained foundations whose enviable destiny on earth is constantly to be addressed as “darling” or “duck”—but always in people who have never been born and, to speak with strict accuracy, never will be. To live thus is to live the life of imagination; to make people live thus is in the power of the greatest novelists, but nobody deserves the title of novelist who cannot take another person out of himself into an imaginary creature. He either contributes to what Dorothy Richardson calls “the vast recreation of vicarious living” or he is a deceiver. His deceit (if it occurs) is hard to prove because there is a large number of persons to whom such expressions as “Grecian profile,” “faultless evening dress,” “soft clinging material,” “drooping eyelashes,” “shy glance,” “dainty lingerie,” and even “trim ankle,” have the conjuring power of Wagner's voluptuous love music. On the other hand, a descriptiveness significant of a complete visualisation may be resented

and caricatured. There are people who would believe me to be merely "swanking" if I were to say that the most difficult to read of all Meredith's novels (save the unfinished one) is infinitely more alive in my imagination than the irritating human poltergeist of "A Bad Boy's Diary." Such is the fact, however, though the only book by Meredith which I can re-read with pleasure is "Evan Harrington" as published in *Once a Week*. "Evan Harrington" can take me out of myself; it has all the captivating qualities of imaginative prose as tolerated by its fastidious students of Scotland Yard, only requiring more definiteness of joy in its close.

Joy is a word aptly evocative of interrogation at this point. Is not the production of some sort of joy the best result achievable by a novel? Mr. Bart Kennedy desires fiction to be "kept clean." Some one has prophesied the extinction of the "dirty" novel. Chaucer and Boccaccio dutifully turn in their graves; while Shakespeare mutters "there's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." Our modern friends have, of course, a salubrious idea at heart—a novel which will not depend upon ugliness, bad smells, cruelty, injustice for its interest. But this we may be sure of: the people of the future will not accept cleanliness as marketable goods. So if dirt is to go and the last "pornophile" is to turn from the shops of London's Villiers and Green Street in utter despair, "clean" fiction must be more generally enticing than is the case now. If, for instance, one wishes to give a thoroughly conventional friend's boy a "clean" but charming tale of school life, one thinks of Tom Hughes, Dean Farrar, Talbot Baines Reed and Mr. R. S. Warren Bell. There one pauses. (Forgive me, brilliant Alec!) Yet millions of people have been to school. The local colour is vivid; the characters are easily made to stand out; and yet

few know how to write a really charming tale about a stolen examination paper, a football match and a bully's discomfiture. Sad, but true. Asked to name really charming stories for modest young ladies, I reply, "Little Women," "Good Wives," "Nellie's Memories," and "We are Seven," and if it were not for the restraining word "charming" I could go on, till a cry of "Mercy!" would stop the outflow, naming dozen after dozen of meritorious and "spotless" books, copies of which might well be nailed by superstitious mammas over the doors behind which girls, not overburdened by brains and dangerously disinclined to industry, begin to consider how they can use their prettiness. But charm, a detaining power, capable of holding greediness and hope in suspense so that the destined person is often simplified to eyes and ears, requires uncommon felicity in the art which would exercise it. O, you guilty ones who, with paltry pedantry and a solemn desire to make the library "go" with the silver-haired butler, have made lists of "the hundred best books," expiate your offence by compiling authentic centuries of charming books. There are not a few who under the thraldom of such a task would "wax desperate with imagination" trying to raise the readable to the level of the charming. But I insist that a charming book can be re-read. It does more than appeal to curiosity; it arouses love, if only one's love of fun. Thus, though I do not remember meeting Miss Louise Alcott, Dean Swift, Alan St. Aubyn, etc., I gladly call on the children of imagination whose names are Meg Brooke, Glumdalclitch, Herbert Flowers, Mona Maclean, Alexander Hagen, Prince Zaleski, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, Count Fosco, Mr. Pecksniff, Alice Mayton, Aranis, Angela Messenger, Nixie Messenger, Adrian Harley, Undine, Francoise Macquart, Lord Henry Wotton, Mary Crookenden, Captain Kettle, Don Q, Zarathustra, Jenny (it matters

not whose), Netta of Goldach, and many others. I know what they are and will do, but they have a life beyond my curiosity, and deeply as I grieve at any persecution of art or sincerity (be it a Zola's or a Colenso's), inflexibly as I admire all scrupulous realism used for art's sake, I do not think that any sane person deliberately retraces the path of a curiosity which has been satisfied by mere foulness or crime. Yet what is beautiful in a character may suddenly become phenomenal, apparent enough to astonish and dazzle, because of circumstances as dismal as Lear's or Lucretia's.

A student of fiction will know by now that I am not easily disturbed by the morals or manners of a book. Like Dr. Arabella Kenealy, however, I do sometimes experience as displeasure the effect of philosophic materialism upon people and upon art. It would, of course, be wrong to accuse our contemporaries of an insensitiveness more generally stubborn than that of the populations preceding us; but Dr. Kenealy is right: our reaction from sentimentality has gone too far. No one who notices the reign of ugliness over toys (e.g., "golliwoggs") can doubt that some malign force works artistically against the charming fancies to which the children of the past turned with unspeakable relief after Sunday afternoons with Mrs. Sherwood and Hesba Stretton.

Before the sense of my personal debt to fiction has quite departed from the reader's mind, I say that from time to time fiction which I could not confidently recommend to a publisher has left on me an impression of living in people quite as strong as I obtain from masterpieces. Especially I remember a young genius resident in South Africa who created a group of female school-teachers, one of whom, sensual and goaded by jealousy, plotted to wound her divinely gentle rival by exposing her to a brutal

outrage. Everybody in this queer novel was alive and the saint adorable ; and yet I would rather have been a credulous folklorist at midnight uprooting a mandrake for the first time than have watched the face of my then employer reading such a work when it was too late to recall it and not too early to pay some of its expenses. Yet if I had been a millionaire I should have published it and other novels, too, which were vital, just perhaps because they were not written for any market but to give definite biography and shape to haunting images.

Here it is well to say that fiction has very much less to do with style and elegance of form than some critics think ; but it has a great deal to do with people, the thoughts which they utter and the feelings which excite them. It is true that few people who have loved a sunrise, the sea, a star, a cosmic man like Byron, a human symbol of Venus, would willingly follow through hundreds of pages the petty people of Jane Austen's fancy, if it were not for her delicious humour, her stylistic felicity. But on the other hand, suppose Mr. Thomas Hardy's subterranean irony were all he had to charm with, should we not—we who believe in good gods and angels, in the life of idea as well as in the life of physical sensations—avoid his work ? But we love the people he has created, people neither stylists nor preachers. Sometimes, indeed, an author hardly realises the possibilities of his power to make imaginary people live in writing. That was the case (I fancy) with Mr. Foster Melliar, the creator of Betty Dewhart. He is a prospering novelist almost *malgré lui*, for he is a poet and doomed, of course, to think of style, form, abstract beauty, and the cinema and the stage both inform him, as they have the very successful Paul Trent, that it is not the literature but the people and the incidents which make fiction pay. H. M. L. Lanark is also a poet and, in novel-writing, a stylist

and a psychologist—ingenious, too ; but comparatively few have taken the trouble to enjoy the genius for characterisation displayed in "The Lanark Series" of short novels and "The Rough Torrent of Occasion." "Writers' writers" really exist and are pathetic objects, unless their merits impassion a pen of might on their behalf.

While I was engaged on this preamble I discovered that Mr. Meredith Starr in collecting the thoughts of others had omitted to present his own thoughts on the subject of the novel. They are, however, well worth hearing, if only for the reason that, to write novels of the lofty kind which he would like to see in circulation, it would be necessary for writers, inconspicuous for personal idealism, to reject the easy help of autobiography and to employ the imaginative creativeness which Mrs. Belloc Lowndes misses in modern fiction. At my request for a statement, Mr. Meredith Starr uttered these words :—

"Literary art should not merely excite, but exalt, the soul. It should not merely instruct or please, but illumine and inspire. It should be psychically educative, and, like an Orphic magician, should evoke from the soul the rhythms of wonder, worship, and triumphant beatitude which are cosmic in scope and godlike in essence. I wish the novel to mirror the unity of life, or, in other words, to show that all possible individuals are latent in every man and that each person may ultimately identify himself with every living object in the universe. Art should give people a foretaste of higher possibilities, attainable perhaps in hundreds of thousands of years. *Mona Lisa*, considered not only as a portrait, but in relation to the symbolic background which Leonardo da Vinci gave her, is art that appeals to me, for she is representative of all womanhood. *Lytton's 'Zanoni,'* which I have been reading for the sixth time, has that quality

of rising above the personal and anecdotal and the merely amusing which I wish to see in fiction. Zanoni, being a cosmic type, is representative of every human being, although he functions in the novel chiefly as an exemplar of love. I add that I am a believer in Nietzsche's dictum that philosophy should walk in the van of art. Artists would then avoid the misfortune of reacting from the sublime to the ridiculous through failure to understand the laws of life. Good art directed by truth should have the effect of awakening genius in people. In other words, it should arouse the higher potencies of human nature."

I am happy in being able to incorporate Mr. Starr's statement in this preamble. It does not conflict with my hedonistic, benevolently medical view of the novel, yet it is in vivid contrast to it. His novel is a clarion; mine is an anodyne; his invites the birth-throes of the new man; mine is a peacemaker that demands not the price of a Lethean drug. And yet our novels might be the same. On this petty paradox I end, while cordially recommending my readers to learn not less than I have from the brilliant novelists who discourse in the following pages.

W. H. CHESSON.

MAURICE HEWLETT

MR. MAURICE HEWLETT, in an interview, said he thought that the people of the present day were too keen on money, and that it might well be said to many of the writers of the age, "The thing would have been better done if you had taken more pains." But they seem to have no time for concentration. Life is such a rush. The old authors took two years over a novel; now a writer turns out two books in a year. The old authors took a delight in their work; nowadays people have their eyes much more fixed upon things which draw them away from their art.

"An author always gets the readers he deserves," said Mr. Hewlett. "It is a great pity that a young man of ability should supply a merely popular demand. A poet or a writer of romance does not observe anything unless he wants to; the idea comes first and observation follows. But the novelist proper proceeds upon observation. He is always observing; and his novel follows of itself. The young men of to-day own a divided duty. There is little time to observe when you have to turn out two novels a year. And they have found out that there is a large public which does not care whether they observe or not. That is the public which uses novels like drugs. All this is temptation to fall short of excellence. They do

not select their material properly, nor are they sufficiently concentrated or sincere. But whoever would achieve creative work, must select and concentrate ; and, above all, he must be sincere. The difference between romance and realism depends chiefly upon whether the idea is hatched before the observation or whether the observation incubates the idea.

“ I think that the best novels are tending to be very short and very concentrated, in the same way that a good poem should be concentrated. I do not see in England a sign of a novelist of the calibre of Tolstoy. I think that realism is settling down on novel-writing as well as on the readers of novels. The pitfall of the writer of romance is undoubtedly sentiment, which can very easily degenerate into sentimentalism, though, of course, you cannot write a romance without sentiment.

“ The only novel I have read during the last fifteen years which is really written in the grand manner is ‘ The Growth of the Soil,’ by Knut Hamsun—a really encyclopædic novel. You feel when you are reading it that you comprehend all time and all existence—which is exactly what you ought to feel when reading a good novel.

“ You must take the trouble to understand things, and English people are intellectually and physically the laziest people in Europe. The only trouble they will take is the trouble to save themselves thinking, for thinking is to them a disturbing and distressing process. One notices this everywhere : on the stage, in the cinema, in fiction, and in the public attitude generally—chiefly, perhaps, in the modern newspaper which is rapidly becoming a cheap and frivolous magazine.

“ In art, the really good work, of course, is the work which is good and at the same time popular, in the sense of carrying a universal appeal. And when you get that, you have everything.

" You must remember this: if you take as the greatest name in literature the name of Homer, and if you ask yourself what Homer's business was in writing his epics, you discover that it was to keep people awake after dinner. That was what he was out for, and he did it.

" In my opinion," concluded Mr. Hewlett, " the only thing that matters is the big thing—to knock everybody sideways with a really great thing. The people must drug themselves with reading, and if they cannot get the good they will take the bad; but if the bad and the good start level, the good will always win."

WILLIAM J. LOCKE

“THE future of the novel is the past of the novel,” said Mr. William J. Locke, when asked to give his views on the changes the novel may undergo. “It satisfies the primitive instincts of mankind to be told a story. It may be told in a thousand different ways, but unless it is a Story it will not survive.

“Time is the melting-pot of fiction as of everything else, and if the novel of the future is a novel that tells a story, then in that melting-pot the whole of the dross will be scummed off and the gold of the story will remain for posterity.

“The mere drab record of the life of an uninteresting personality may be of interest to people passing through a certain phase of thought and existence, but a generation must arise to whom this is a matter of no concern. There must be a reaction towards romance. Whether this will occur during the present state of the world or after the world has been a little more reconstructed, one cannot say. Things will settle down as soon as the youth of the country find fresh ideals. During the war the youth of the country have been strung up to an ideal of Victory. They have attained it, and the consequences of Victory have not been what they have expected. And so

we have all the youth of the country groping after some fresh ideal, and until they have found it, politically, or socially, or spiritually, the world will remain in its present state of disorganisation, which is reflected in the novels of the younger writers of the present day.

"So much of the literature of to-day is static, when it ought to be dynamic. It has not got the force of life in it. If you look round, you will see that those novels of the newer school that have made a real appeal to the public are those which possess this particular quality—namely, of being dynamic. For, after all, if a novel is not a living thing, it is naught—just like any other form of art.

"A thing I could never understand," concluded Mr. Locke, "is why the people who call themselves realists think that gloom and despair only are real. Joy is quite as real as either, yet why is it never treated realistically? The saying of the Frenchman, 'Art is a corner of life seen through a temperament,' may be true, but it certainly is not true that art *is* a corner of life seen through a microscope. We do not take a microscopic lens to our cheese when we eat it. Why should we do so with life when we live it?"

ALFRED NOYES

“IN my opinion,” said Mr. Alfred Noyes, in the course of an interview, “the prose fiction of to-day is doing for this generation exactly what the Elizabethan drama did for the Elizabethans. The Elizabethans’ drama was, of course, written by poets, and it has always seemed to me that the best fiction of to-day is written by modern minds of very much the same quality, though they are dealing with a different subject-matter.

“An American critic, a short time ago, described the fiction of to-day as being produced apparently by a syndicate, which he called ‘British Novelists, Ltd.,’ because there was so great a similarity between the books of a large number of modern writers. But this was also characteristic of the Elizabethan period. It would be easy to imagine, for instance, that the works of Webster and John Ford were minor works of Shakespeare. One could point to a modern John Ford in Mr. Thomas Hardy, and Mr. Joseph Conrad in the Elizabethan age might easily have been the author of Webster’s ‘White Devil.’ And I think it may be said with certainty that the outstanding work of to-day is distinguished from the rest by its essential poetry, which is not a matter of outward form. The best description of poetry is, that it takes

the isolated fact or incident and relates it to the whole —sets the temporal in relation to the eternal.

" In one way or another this is done by all the outstanding novelists of to-day. Sometimes through that particular kind of negation or pessimism which is merely a casting off of the temporal for the eternal, and sometimes by what I think is the preferable method of Shakespeare with his ' cloudless, boundless human view.' Apart from an inevitable narrowing of his field of vision caused by a certain confusion of art with politics, one might say that the method of Kipling is the method of Shakespeare. He gives you as grim a tragedy as any other writer in the ' Badalia Herodsfoot,' but he commits himself to no more pessimism than does the author of ' Macbeth.'

" It has always seemed to me that much of the literature of ' rebellion,' in fact, is a protest, not so much against forms of government as against the very constitution of the Universe whereby the rain descends on both the just and the unjust, and that such rebellion, therefore, is in a sense a confession of weakness. In any case, it is futile. The method of Shakespeare never indulges in it and eventually, I believe, it is the writers who follow that impartial method who will be recognised as our greatest.

" It is a curious fact that the writers who follow what I have called the Shakespeare method have a public of quite a different kind from that of the John Fords and Websters of to-day. The latter are usually followed each by his own class or coterie, and their works are usually dealt with as if they were chiefly important as social documents. The situation is a somewhat paradoxical one, for in spite of the propagandist nature of much of their work, they are at the same time regarded by their followers as more definitely artists for art's sake than those who are really concerned, simply and solely, with their art. I have not the slightest doubt, for instance,

that twenty-five years hence 'Stories in Grey' and 'Here and Hereafter,' by Barry Pain, will take their place as the pure gold of contemporary fiction, while much of the propagandist work of to-day will be forgotten, because either the goal for which it fought will have been reached, or its aim will have been proved to be illusory.

"Barry Pain's 'Sparkling Burgundy,' 'The Commonplace,' and a dozen others, are masterpieces of the short story that will mellow with time, and are equal to anything written by de Maupassant. They are also perfect examples of the method of the independent writer (free from any kind of propaganda, or social or political prejudice) which I believe will emerge from the present confusion of ideas as the most important artistically. There are single sentences in some of this work that convey a character more vividly than whole chapters in many other writers. When the actor-manager arrives late for lunch, for instance :

" 'An unexpected rehearsal, my dear fellow,' he said to Garth in a clearly articulated whisper that carried to every part of the room. 'Royal command for next Friday. Quite unexpected. Gratifying, eh?'

" We have the whole character, perfectly, in the last two words ; and that is almost all that, in the lucid economy of his style, the author devotes to it. There is a gallery of similarly vivid contemporary portraits in this writer's best work, and it will have a far more certain interest for the future than will the less central work of most of the propagandist, communist, polygamist and what-not work of to-day.

" There are one or two other writers of whom one could make a similar prophecy, and it is a curious fact that none of these men has ever been a member of a coterie. All have been so independent that, frequently, their reviews in the press are to be measured

by paragraphs, while even the members of the poetic coterie, frantically seeking short cuts to fame for each other, usurp columns upon columns in praise of their elect. The literature of the future will be something very different from what is now promised by the coteries. That is quite certain. In fact, the coterie system in this country has lowered the value of contemporary criticism to a point where the independent writer can only keep aloof and laugh at the frantic farce. Fortunately, the public is rapidly discovering a mind of its own. But I could tell you one story of a recent mistake made by the leading English critics and meekly accepted by every influential journal in London, with regard to the work of one of the greatest writers in the nineteenth century. The mistake was a point of fact, involving both the knowledge and the critical perception of those who made it, and it was enough in itself to prove the amazing, almost cynical, carelessness that has overtaken our literary columns since they were abandoned to the coteries. I shall not say more than this now, for I shall have more to say about it in the near future; but it was as grave an error as would be the acceptance of 'The Chimes' under a new title, as a new work.

"I believe that the tendency in the next few years will be away from the methods of the coteries and more and more in favour of the independent writers; moreover, that there will be a re-discovery of the principle of art for art's sake, in the finest sense; and also, perhaps, of the beauty of narrative for narrative's sake. It is so easy to fool the reader with the pseudo realistic and the pseudo analytical. It is so much easier to give the subtle reasons for each smile of the heroine than to give the smile and the good story. Of course, there are half a dozen writers to-day who are maintaining the highest standards; but for the most part at present we are in the midst of an orgy

of easy methods—free verse, free music, free painting ; and fiction, too, free from all the laws of order and proportion. There will emerge, I am sure, a greater care for form and a more energetic will to conquer rather than to evade the difficulties of literature.”

ROBERT HICHENS

WHEN asked to give his opinion on the future development of the novel, Mr. Robert Hichens replied (by letter) :—

“ I think the duty of the novelist is to have a story to tell and to tell it clearly, with directness and force.

“ I do not think mere studies of character are enough to make a satisfactory novel, though many people seem to think so. Often one finds only a vague and nebulous story wandering through clouds of psychology.

“ I believe the successful novel of the future, as the successful novel of the past, will be the novel that tells a human, interesting story, in which character is shown in action, not merely in endless conversations.

“ All men and women love an engrossing and natural story which moves along to a predestined and unforced end. A novel of this kind will never be out of fashion.”

W. L. GEORGE

WHEN asked to make a statement on the subject under discussion, Mr. W. L. George said he thought that a clear distinction should be made between the novel of entertainment and the novel of significance.

"This distinction seldom is made," continued Mr. George. "In all the literary histories I have read I found Walter Scott (an entertainer) undifferentiated from Trollope (a critic). The importance of this lies in the 'revival of romanticism' which has been discussed by romantics. Romanticism may revive, we may soon read another 'Catriona' or a 'Fortunes of Nigel,' and I shall read them with delight; indeed, the romantic novel may revive, but merely as an entertainment: it will not mean anything.

"When I say that a novel does not 'mean' anything, I imply that certain kinds of novels do mean something. Those are the novels which criticise life, while the romantic novels merely embroider life. The novelists who criticised life should stand forth from the ages—Stendhal, Flaubert, Dickens, Tolstoi, Butler, Turgenev; wide is their noble array; they did not limit themselves, and their voice is familiar though their tongue be dust.

" The critical tradition is not dead ; Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Wells, M. Anatole France sustain it. Though, during the last ten years, many have deserted it, attempted to confine the novel to impressions of sense-pictures which the paint-pot and the film produce better ; though many a novelist has restricted himself to an analysis of character (generally his own) ; though the faithful of the tradition have been sneered at as sociologists, propagandists ; though they have been called out-of-date—they are not disturbed.

" Romanticism may revive ; it existed with Mlle. de Scudéry in 1660 ; the photography of Zola may revive ; the symbolism of Mallarné may revive. But that which must be revived never had life. That which persists is alone eternal. The critical novel is a form which persists ; when M. Anatole France tells us that art is nature seen through a temperament, he means to include in nature the conditions of man, his place in the state, his customs, his laws, and above all the changing face of his world. Theories of housing have in literature a place equal to that of hyacinths.

" The critical novel is the novel of significance ; it will hold its place in the future as it has in the past, discussing social conditions and remaking the minds of men. Already to-day several of the younger novelists, particularly the women, are abandoning impression and emphasising psychology. That will go on. But there are those who think that in the present world, in its mood of immense disturbance, when kingship, marriage, capitalism, faith, and even freedom are subjects for discussion, the young men and women who join in the debate will avoid these questions and give no stories of café and sword, as of love on the rolling wave This is childish.

"To me the novel is the showman of life; it's business is to hold up the mirror to the period. The future will not lack hands to seize that mirror and compel man to view himself in human society."

FRANK SWINNERTON

“ IT seems to me that the long series of chronicle novels is on its last legs,” said Mr. Swinnerton, “ that people do not want it any more, and that they have made up their minds that it is a dull article. The novel of incident has always been and it always will be with us, but I do not see any sign at all of the growth of any really romantic fiction. My friends do not seem to be moving in any such direction, nor do I find among the manuscripts which I have read professionally any indication of a romantic trend. This does not mean that it is impossible, because developments must come from the younger writers, but my own belief is in an increase of stories in which the principal characters are followed for a long period but in less detail than has been the case with the chronicle novel hitherto. The basis will be realistic, but the books will not be realism in the sense hitherto accepted.

“ I do not believe that the ‘cradle to the grave’ novel will continue, but it does seem as though we might be going to have a return to something like the novel of the eighteenth century, of which the prime example is probably ‘Tom Jones.’ Whether one likes his work or not, one must realise that Mr. Compton Mackenzie is heading straight back for the

eighteenth century, and other novelists are tending to do the same sort of thing in a less copious manner. That is to say, there will be a great movement in the direction of a definite or plain tale, but the whole thing will be coloured by pictures of manners of a lighter or more humorous description.

“ The impulse, I think, will be in the direction of a humorous rather than a romantic synthesis, because we have been having a great many extremely serious novels, and it might be against seriousness in fiction and the pre-occupation with absurd little solemnities that the reaction will come. To say this might imply that all our novelists are going to attempt the same thing, which would be ridiculous. I only suggest a movement which it seems to me that novelists, who already have some standing, may be making. It is definitely of the novel of social life that I am thinking.

“ Up to the present, we have had social novels in which the lives of the protagonists were swamped by details of their *milieu*. The novel I see is essentially heroic, in the sense that the principal characters will stand out against and be heightened by their environment. From environment we cannot possibly get away, because it means so much in modern life, and, therefore, in the typical life which novelists are bound to portray. But we do not want our novels to be all environment, any more than we can stand such an obsession in our own daily lives.

“ I have been looking to find a great arrival of young novelists as the result of peace and the sharp break caused by the war, but I do not see it. The novelists who have recently emerged are all men of my own generation, and the young ones are just beginning to abandon the writing of poetry. Whether they will turn to the novel or the play, I cannot imagine, but judging from their poetry, I should think that their novels would not be very helpful.

“ Before the war it was said that this great purge

would produce a reaction toward romance. Now the same idea is recurring. I believe the wish is father to the thought ; but when one uses the word romantic, one is immediately in a difficulty. It is one of the words that ought to be destroyed. Each person who uses it believes himself to be the owner of the only accurate definition. In fact, I believe that 'romantic' is only used as a word to scourge that horrible thing 'realism.' But there can be no romance without realism, and no realism without romance.

"Accordingly, it is perfectly safe to say that the novel of the future will be both realistic and romantic. It will only be healthy if it is both. It must have definite relation to the recognisable life of some part or parts of the community, and it must also be heroic in the way I have suggested. I think it very likely that we shall see the sentimental interest put in its place and a good deal more concentration upon career and life outside the few months of amorous ecstasy with which so many novels in the past have dealt. I do not mean to sneer at the love story—far from it—but I think that a greater unity will be achieved if it can be regarded as an element in the lives of the characters, rather than as their justification."

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI

"I THINK that, in an ascending age, the classic of yesterday becomes the degenerate of to-morrow," said Mr. Ludovici. "In a descending age, the degenerate of yesterday becomes to-morrow's classic. People too readily accept the endorsement of posterity as a demonstration of an artistic claim to merit. But if posterity is inferior to the age which condemned the artist originally, obviously the admiration of posterity is worth nothing, and a man who finds his works increasingly admired as he grows older, should ask himself whether the age is getting better or worse. It may be the increasing vulgarity of his contemporaries which alone accounts for his increasing popularity. Therefore, to outline the probable character of a work of art of the future is to grope entirely in the dark. For if man continues degenerating, modern standards will be too far above his head to be comprehended. And if he becomes more desirable than he is at present, modern classics will appear as so much rubbish.

"If life becomes fuller for the individual, there is no doubt in my mind that the novel will suffer almost complete evanescence, because vicarious experiences can only be interesting to the mass of mankind when there is a good deal of suppressed or un-

expressed passion about. Even to the psychologist who is now learning to study his science very much more by observation than introspection, the novel will be, in an age of fuller lives, more or less superfluous.

"As a rapid demonstration of this view of the possibilities of the novel, let it be remembered that at the present moment in Europe where, owing to climatic and other conditions, life is fullest in countries like Italy and Spain, or in pre-war Syria, novels are not nearly so greedily read as in England, France and Germany, where large sections of the population undoubtedly suffer a good deal of suppression which forces them to find satisfactory vicarious experiences.

"This of course does not apply to the rare creative novel where new emotional or intellectual possibilities are for the first time brought to the notice of the reader. This kind of novel, by enriching life, would necessarily belong to the mechanism which supplies a fuller existence. According to that principle, seven-eighths of the novels of the present day would be ruled out.

"In the event of the future witnessing a re-definition of values, the novel, like every other form of art, might serve the purpose of presenting these values in their application to life. In this sense, they would be what is glibly called by the average critic didactic. My novels, for instance, are always called didactic—not because they differ in method from any other novel, but because their characters in conversation express opinions. Since, however, these opinions are frequently at variance with those the reader has been used to, their doctrinal content, by becoming unusually apparent to him, leads him to suspect they are more didactic than the novel he has just put down by a writer with whose views he entirely agrees.

"If, as I cannot help feeling, the commercial and

industrial organisation of society is tending towards intensification and elaboration rather than gradual decline, then in all highly industrialised countries like Germany, England and America, the demand for vicarious living will increase, and the novel of the future will meet, in the description of good food, fresh air, scenic beauty, passion and so forth, all the unsatisfied desires of modern humanity.

A. E. W. MASON

"I CONSIDER that it is impossible to classify tendencies in novel-writing," said Mr. A. E. W. Mason, when interviewed. "I think that one particularly good book which seizes the attention of the public will make the public look out for other books of a similar kind. I think, too, that authors who have been impressed by the qualities of one particular book, say its method, or its period or its spirit, may be struck by an excellence that is new to them and start working on the same lines. And after these will come the deliberate imitators. The imitators will fade away and really make no difference one way or another. The best examples will go on living.

"The completeness with which the author realises his ideas and the skill with which he can present them, between them are the two causes of permanence in literature. There is a passage in 'La Cousine Bette' where Balzac expounds the doctrine of authorship. The author, according to him, should keep on writing, not necessarily because he will always turn out something very good, but because when the really fine idea comes to him, he will in the first place know it at once, and in the second, be able

to present it to you who do not know it in its full beauty.

"The author and critic alike who upholds any particular school or method to the exclusion of any other, as so many are inclined to do to-day, simply convicts himself of a very complete ignorance of the literature of his own country. 'In my father's house there are many mansions.' That is as true of literature as of other things.

"Time brings in its revenges. A dramatic critic who for years has treated all but the high-brow plays as hardly worth consideration, is now producing a melodrama of his own in New York, with aeroplanes and all the rest of the melodramatic paraphernalia. It is so easy to pronounce a distinct judgment that this or that particular work is right, but if that judgment includes the view that every other style or method is wrong, then the judgment must of necessity be unsound. For instance, one man will hold that the clear Athenian style of Bacon is the only good style, but if that man comes up against a volume of de Quincy with its tremendous corridors of prose, he will, if he is reasonable, understand that he has put forward a judgment that the evidence of literature confutes.

"A novel must not be dull. Unless the author has incident in his novel, his novel must be very incomplete, for if he holds, as all novelists will hold, that the exposition of character is his theme, it is only under the stress of events that character is really tested or exhibited. And the author who will give you two or three hundred pages of analysing is asking the reader to take too much on trust. The reader will want to see whether these characters about whom he is told so much really behave accordingly. Action is the test of character.

"The reason why I think the novel makes its appeal both to the author and the reader of to-day is its

flexibility of form. One still sees an effort on the part of this or that author or critic to insist upon the preservation of the unities. The novel is really an artistic escape from the unities. It aims by its length and by the fact that it is not a pictorial representation of life, at a wider field than is possible under the more rigid form of the drama. It is the child of the epic, not the offspring of the theatre.

“ Stevenson’s ‘Wrecker’ was much criticised because it roamed all over the world and was therefore said to be deficient in form. But as a fact it was fulfilling the real reason for the existence of the novel as a literary form.

“ This effort to give arbitrarily to the novel the same limitations as those which of necessity hamper the play, comes, I think, from France, and is one which novelists should resist. All the corners of the world are really very close together nowadays, and it would be absurd for the novelist to be bounded in his choice of a theatre of action.

“ I think, too, that the novel should or must appeal to the imagination. It should suggest ever so much more than it says, and if it can awaken in the reader some vision of horizons only half guessed at before, then it *is* achieving its work.

“ I should say to a young author, ‘ Never forget that in most, if not all, great permanent imaginative work, a really good story based upon the eternal passions is at the bottom of it.’

“ Regarding the future, I look forward to a time when man will accept all schools of literature and judge only the particular example by its own intrinsic merit. He will have to have a standard of judgement, but one wants the standard to be the truth of the book to itself and in itself, rather than it should fit into a sort of Chinese puzzle of literature.”

DR. ARABELLA KENEALY

“The modern craze for Feminism, athletics, sports and politics,” said Dr. Kenealy, in an interview, “is destroying the emotional element in women, so that they are ceasing to be interested in love-stories, romantic passion, or human ideals.

“Every normal woman possesses in herself the masculine potential that enables her to produce male offspring. This is a sort of racial trust-fund which she may draw upon and develop as masculine powers in herself precisely as a mother might realise monetary investments held in trust for her sons. But if she does this, her sons will be effeminate and physically, mentally, or in other ways, inferior in type. For she will have expended, in developing in herself and in cultivating masculine ideals, the potential virile energy of manhood invested in her for transmission to male offspring.

“The lack of emotion and romanticism in women must increasingly destroy the vogue for the novel. Already, this is being felt in the modern trend of fiction. Novelists are giving less and less prominence to the love element, so that the novel is rapidly changing its form. It is becoming more analytical, more a study of character, an exposition of politics,

of ethics or opinions. It is no longer a story written round the love-episode of a human life. Romance bulks small, its bearings upon action are belittled; it is presented in the terms of playful comedy, of cynicism or burlesque.

" I think that the main interest of the novel should centre wholly in the love-episode, all the other interests being merely accessory. The emotions roused by love in the persons of the story, and the influence of these on character and destiny, are the true theme of fiction. Politics, ethics, travel, points-of-view and so forth, should be presented in other forms of literature.

" As an illustration of the attitude of the modern woman towards love, I may mention that recently at a theatre two comely young women sitting next to me jeered at and derided every expression of sentiment or other romantic indication in the play. This was no doubt an extreme case, but it is one of many similar experiences I have had and is symptomatic of the changed attitude of women to a sentiment once all-potent in their lives. These young women were not scorning and mocking from spite because love had not come into their lives, but, being athletic and masculine of type, they were incapacitated by temperament from experiencing love, and were vindictive against an emotion denied to them; just as a blind man might be angered in the presence of that which others were enjoying as a beautiful and inspiring scene, but which to him was blank and void.

" I think that the higher evolution both of literature and of humanity must be along lines of ennobling and intensifying the love-passion and increasing its importance as a transfiguring emotion. But the present trend is to destroy it, by diverting woman's interest into less vital and fructifying channels. Men may be sure that a Feminist cult which has toppled them

from that heroic pedestal on which natural women delighted to set them and which has reduced them in the eyes of modern women to the level of 'old bean!' or 'pal!' is not moving on the lines of progress."

MRS. CHAMPION DE CRESPIGNY

" So far, I think that the psychic element in the modern novel has done more harm than good," said Mrs. de Crespigny, " for the reason that so few writers have really studied the subject, but have merely used it as a peg to hang a plot on. They have almost always taken the unpleasant side, and even when they have read up the subject, if they have done so merely with that object, it always fails to bring conviction. They have not taken the psychic side seriously—have not realised that it presents a very abstruse study from the scientific point of view ; and I think that when they do realise it, as I am sure they will, the psychic element will play an enormous part in the future of the novel, and I sincerely hope that novelists will shoulder their responsibilities in this connection.

" I also think the novel will alter from the man's point of view, and that men will consider literature and humanity much more from the woman's standpoint than has hitherto been the case. Women have always, for obvious reasons, studied men more than men have studied women. And for this reason the understanding of men's moods has until quite lately been woman's main line of defence, when the ' strong

right arm,' to put it figuratively, has been all that counted. The only way a woman could achieve her destiny was through a subtle knowledge of the other sex, whereas man never really troubled to make a study of women ; there was no particular reason why he should. Now, I think he must. And this will have a great effect on the novel of the future.

" There is one great difference between men and women : A woman will take a set of attributes or qualities, place them on a pedestal, and fall in love with them ; then when the man comes along she will endow him with all those attributes ; that is to say, she idealises him. Whereas a man falls in love with a woman and takes it for granted that she has all the attributes of a perfect being just *because* he is in love with her.

" I want to see the serious novel lead public opinion. The pen has always boasted of its power, but as a matter of fact it has been a servant—as far as fiction is concerned—since it usually tries to give the public what it wants. I want to see it lead public opinion on to higher levels, and I don't think it will ever do that so long as it preserves the present note of pessimism and the glorification of negligible things. I think writers have a very great responsibility in being messengers and I think that they ought to derive their inspirations from higher planes and to bring into the world a general note of optimism, beauty, and high aspirations."

In an article in "The Nineteenth Century and After," for March, 1921, entitled "Ideals in Fiction," Mrs. Champion de Crespigny wrote concerning the novelists of the present day :—

" There is no sign of decadence in the quality of talent or workmanship. Force of diction, certainly of touch, vividness of presentment and colour have never reached a higher water-mark than to-day. Why, then, should so many of our forefront writers

devote their unquestioned talents and imaginative conception to the wholly squalid side of existence? Why dwell in detail with—in some cases—an abandonment of common decency, on little trivial incidents in everyday life that have in themselves no importance, no genuine interest, no particular lesson to teach . . .

“ To dwell on meticulous description of the purely trivial, of unpleasant everyday incidents which civilisation has taught us to ignore, is a different matter. With some it passes for strength, but it is not strength. It is merely a photographic presentment of a negligible incident with no great emotions behind it, no strong forces hinted at, no background of unconscious appeal to stimulate the brain by its reflection of finer sentiment—merely a bald incident much better kept out of sight. What amusement or benefit from any point of view is to be got out of a detailed description of somebody’s sick headache?—or a morbid probing into some unsavoury disease?—or the unpleasant ritual of the dentist’s chair? That it is the truth, is no answer. Of course it is the truth, but a truth it is in no way fruitful to dwell upon. It is a truth that a man of untidy habit, with a beard, eating thick soup is an unpleasant spectacle, but it is not the least interesting or instructive to visualise it. There is nothing of value behind that sort of thing; it is a mere expression of the morbid taste of the day brought into being by the depression and consequent lowering of vitality engendered by the unavoidable facts of war.

“ That is the active danger of pessimism in all its forms. It lowers man’s vitality, his power of facing life. It hinders evolution of the brain and character by robbing him of the resilience that enables him to stand up again and again to adversity and discouragement. The ultimate expression of pessimism is suicide. The bearers of messages—not always on the surface, but conveyed rather by results—

through art and literature have great responsibilities ; to them much has been given and of them much will be expected. The dissection of dustbins is not the only road to truth ; the faithful portrayal of the contents may show great power of observation, an interest in rotten cabbages and broken eggshells ; it may be very clever, but should the object of a book be to advertise the cleverness of the author, or to help and ease humanity on its rough road ? Is the cleverness of the author of very much moment in the scheme of things ? Is it more exhilarating to see on the wall the study of a tin pan with the brushmarks as they should be, or a picture that for the moment lifts one high above squalor and the remembrance of sordid surroundings, infusing into the day's work the optimistic reflection that the world we live in is still beautiful ?

“ Complaints have lately been made that whereas the public will spend half a guinea or more on a seat in the theatre for the evanescent pleasure of an evening, they refuse to spend seven or eight shillings on a book which they can keep for ever. But if a book whenever they dip into it presents to them a side of life they would rather forget, why should they wish to keep it ? To beautify the commonplace is of course essentially the mission of art, but to leave it commonplace is to do what the world can do for itself. In speaking of a modern book someone remarked not long ago, in referring to a meticulous description of an unpleasant form of disease, ‘ The mere thought of it gives me a feeling of physical nausea ! ’ The truth no doubt—nothing but the truth, but neither stimulating nor, except to a morbid imagination, at all interesting.

“ There is no question of ability in the world of letters at the present time. Such names as Galsworthy, Conrad, Hugh Walpole, Sheila Kaye-Smith, May Sinclair, and a score of others, are in themselves

a guarantee of fine workmanship and vivid colour. It is only necessary to compare the work of thirty or even twenty years ago with present fiction to realise an increase of power and virility in the popular novelists of to-day. Side by side with the modern writer, the favourite novels of the early part of this century and the end of last—always excepting such outstanding examples as Hardy, Meredith, and a few others that will remain classics—give a general impression of corners rounded, a want of sharp outlines, of directness of manner, rather as though the marks of the graver's chisel had been softened with sand-paper. With the unquestioned force of the writers of to-day is it not possible for the pen to justify its claim to power and no longer follow where it should lead? Can it not lift public opinion and the popular taste from levels of pessimism and dustbins into something nearer the skies, and forget to be clever in the effort to help humanity through the slough of a disciplinary evolution? ”

RAFAEL SABATINI

“THE achievement of realism should be the aim of every novelist,” said Mr. Sabatini, “no matter what the *genre* in which he elects to work. But at the same time it is necessary to bear in mind that a writer of novels is not a reporter, nor need he be a chronicler of trifles, and that before his work can possess any real value it must contain a story supplied by his imagination. In the unfolding of this he employs realism to impart to it the movement and colour of actual life. In other words, he must never forget that however desirable a quality realism may be, it is to be used only as the means to an end, and never as the end in itself.

“If I insist upon a fact so self-evident it is because the world of art is troubled to-day by a school of unimaginative and arid performers who abhor and denounce the story in literature, the melody in music and the subject in painting. This school has its roots in over-educated sterility. It extols the manner—which it has acquired in grammar school and university—above the matter, whose production depends upon mental qualities beyond acquisition. It is a school that carries self-assertiveness to aggressive lengths, and compels attention by the noise it makes with the facility of all things hollow.

“ But not all its noise can succeed in permanently distracting the world from the basic fact that the matter is all, and the manner a detail. Where the creative faculty is absent, no amount of laborious chronicling of minutiae in literature, no combinations of harmony in music or lavish use of colour in painting, can ever produce a work of art, great or little. It is better to invent a great story and set it down crudely than to exploit the treasures of language for dazzling verbal combinations that relate nothing. Not that even this is commonly achieved. It is, after all, the great stories, sounding deeply into the emotions, that find for themselves almost instinctively the force and glory of beautiful expression. The imagination that can conceive greatly, rarely fails to discover the language that will do it justice.

“ The so-called ‘realist’—by which I mean the disciple of the school to which I am alluding—fails of his own avowed object because he crawls with his nose to the ground, intent upon discovering that which those who walk erect have overlooked. He describes each blade of grass seen at close quarters as if it were an oak, and every puddle as if it were an ocean; and he sneers at the fools who waste themselves in writing of the mountains on the horizon and beyond it, when here, under their very feet, if they will but stoop to see, are such lovely worm-casts waiting to be described.

“ In spite of them, the future of literature will pursue the lines upon which it has evolved throughout the past. Romanticism will remain safely and firmly enthroned, and will never lack for ministers and subjects.”

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES.

“THE future of the novel is bound up with the future of the creative element in literature generally,” said Mrs. Belloc Lowndes. “Into that future we can only peer dimly, guiding ourselves as best we may by the past and observing the movements and tendencies of the present.

“I think no honest person can deny that the creative element is playing a less and less important part in the fiction of to-day. I can only think of one unquestionably great writer now living with whom the creative element is supreme. I mean Thomas Hardy. The novelists of the present day seem almost to disdain this creative power as old-fashioned, and their work becomes either photography or autobiography, often both. The first and greatest aims of every writer of fiction should be beauty and truth, and not a few of the moderns have made pictures of their own lives and circumstances which are both true and beautiful. If, as has been said, ‘Art is life seen through a temperament,’ they achieve ‘art.’ It is when they leave what is to them safe ground and attempt work of pure imagination that they generally come to grief, much as a clever photographer might fail if he suddenly tried to paint.

“I am probably one of the very few critics and

writers who think it impossible to tell to-day what is likely to survive in English literature. The works of imagination written in the past which were destined to enduring fame were thought very little of by the critics and casual readers of their day. The great master and precursor of our finest English prose—I mean Daniel Defoe—was regarded by his contemporaries as a venal journalist who, between hiring himself out first to one and then to another political patron, tossed off such stories as ‘Robinson Crusoe’ and ‘Moll Flanders’ to turn an honest penny.

“In France, the Abbé Prevost turned out innumerable dull romances which none of his more cultivated contemporaries regarded with anything but contempt. Yet his ‘Manon Lescaut’ has now been for over a hundred years assigned by every type of French critic and reader an unique place as an imaginative study of the human heart.

“In our own time, if there was one novelist who was held in contempt and in kindly derision by all the more serious critics of his day, it was Anthony Trollope. Yet in spite of his large and, from the creative point of view, uneven output, he is the one writer of his time who is steadily growing in public estimation. Someone once said that it required a man of genius to find another man of genius out. The one exception of the flood of good-humoured depreciation which overwhelmed Trollope in his own lifetime and in which, by the way, he himself was quite willing to join, was the opinion of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

“I would like to quote another example. I am old enough—or young enough—to remember the way in which the novels of George Gissing used to be reviewed and spoken of on publication in ‘the best literary circles.’ His novels were variously described as gloomy, painful, morbid, dull, and his writing was declared to be lacking in distinction.

“ To go back to the man who is to be the greatest of them all and who, fortunately for the world, is still with us, Thomas Hardy. Mr. Hardy himself told me some years ago that he had left off writing fiction because of the way in which his last novel ‘ *Jude the Obscure*,’ had been reviewed by the critics and by those readers whose opinion counted with the public.

“ I have sometimes thought what an interesting and amusing symposium could be composed were a group of well-known critics to put down now their honest opinion as to what, say, six books of the last thirty years will be still read a hundred years hence, from 1900 to 2020.

“ The truth is that every generation, almost every decade, has its literary fashion and fashions of the moment. I remember in the early nineties a witty lady’s remark : ‘ Oh, Meredith, what crimes are being committed in thy name ! ’ Original writers—I do not necessarily mean great writers—always enjoy that which has been described as the sincerest form of flattery. For one thing it is much easier to imitate a difficult and contorted style than it is to write really fine plain English. A great writer uses realism, symbolism, Dorothy-Richardsonism (if I may coin an expression), just as a great painter uses the colours on his palette. The measure of his success is shown—if we go to bedrock—in the extent to which he has created real characters instinct with the breath of life. I do not say that I think this mysterious vivifying power differentiates good art from bad, for to do so would be to condemn, ever since imaginative literature came into being, the vast bulk of it. The power of imparting the breath of life to an imagined character is the rarest of all the writer’s attributes. The only prose writer of her day who had it, with the exception of the mighty Scott, was Jane Austen. In this connection may I recall the strange case of

Balzac, perhaps the only French writer who has been truly compared with Shakespeare? Balzac, for the most part, wrote a poor, mean, involved style. His marvellous gift of imagination, his puissant power of creating not a group or even a crowd but a whole generation of human beings who all stood on their own feet, talked in their own language, lived, loved and suffered in their own individual ways, while reluctantly provoking a certain measure of recognition from his contemporaries, did not compensate, as far as the 'Romantics' were concerned, for his obvious defects. Yet which of the 'Romantics,' with the exception of Victor Hugo, has in any sense survived? Balzac is more living to-day than he was in the thirties and forties of the last century.

"As to the best method to produce fine literature, an author's best method must surely differ in each case. Personally, I consider that the less 'cleverness' he brings to his work, the more likely he is to produce a permanent contribution to the literature of the world. I go so far as to say that cleverness is the bane of the modern imaginative writer. To every would-be young novelist I would say: 'Be good, dear man, and let who will be clever.' Lest I be misunderstood, I would like to explain that by 'Good' I mean good in the sense of turning out good, sound, human stuff, though even then, one comes back to the vital fact that, *pace* obstinate old Carlyle, genius has never been a question of taking pains. Genius gets there somehow by a path he himself could not retrace if his life depended on it. Whether he does his work as Blake did, under unfortunate material difficulties and with the shadow of insanity more or less over him all the time, or whether he pays £5 a year to a groom to call him at five every morning and then turns out 250 words every quarter of an hour, as Anthony Trollope did for three hours every day

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before starting out on his hard, fatiguing labours as a high post-office official, it matters naught so that the stuff created be real flesh and blood, and recognised as such by succeeding generations of real men and women."

MRS. BAILLIE-REYNOLDS

MRS. BAILLIE-REYNOLDS wishes to state that the remarks that follow are simply those of an avid reader of fiction, and that she is talking entirely from the reader's standpoint and not from the author's.

"There are two outstanding characteristics that I notice with increasing force in all the best fiction that is turned out to-day," said Mrs. Baillie-Reynolds. "The first is the almost total decay of imaginative power, and the second is the prevalence of a horrible false sentiment which takes the form of finding nothing interesting which is not also more or less disgusting.

"There is a pretence of intellectuality in all this work, but as a matter of fact, the school of fiction that is now taking the lead, the school which is getting all the serious reviewing, is not really intellectual at all, but will be found, if carefully analysed, to consist merely in a series of sense-impressions which resolve themselves ultimately into very little more than an intensive study of sexual appetites.

"I saw a book by a new author reviewed only the other day for its profound thoughtfulness. Procuring and reading it, I found only elaborate descriptions of the way in which warmth, sunshine, flowers, rich food, pretty scenery, soft cushions, fruit in silver

dishes, combine to titillate the senses to the point of sex-awareness, or sex-craving, the existence of which is supposed to justify any surrender to animal instinct.

“ Even in books which do contain other ingredients and better work, there is one feature which I own I find deplorable, but which is growing to be almost universal. They are all exercises upon the one theme that chastity is not a matter of principle, but merely of personal preference.

“ Mr. Bernard Shaw has succeeded in persuading the half-educated that there is no difference between right and wrong ; and the name of Freud, which is supposed to stand for psycho-analysis, stands really for the process of reducing everything in the world to terms of sex.

“ Our modern system of reviewing is doing much to increase the evil. Editors are tending more and more to place the reviewing of fiction in the hands of those who themselves write fiction. This is a wholly vicious arrangement, and that for two distinct reasons. The first reason is that a writer will be guided by his personal preferences. He or she will select for favourable notice only such books as are written on certain lines. I know, almost for certain, when I take up certain journals, whose work will be noticed and whose work will be ignored. Either you must write the kind of work this particular novelist happens to fancy ; or—here is the second danger—you must yourself be a reviewer of fiction as well as an author—and thus a person to be placated. ‘ You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours ’ is largely the motto of to-day’s reviewing.

“ The ultimate indictment which I bring against the fiction which does get the serious reviews nowadays, is, however, not so much that it is unimaginative, not that it is sensual, not even that it is (as I think it) dull.

"It is, quite plainly, that to me it is false. False to life, false to type, false to reality.

"I have said, on many platforms, that the gulf between realism and reality is as wide as that between spiritualism and spirituality—than which I can say nothing stronger.

"I accuse this modern fiction of being unreal. It omits completely that aspect of life which makes life to me a real thing. It takes no count of the hereafter.

"It is all written from the outside, though it lays such violent claims to introspection. It is wholly materialistic. Such is its confusion of thought that it makes no distinction at all between the passion of lust and the virtue of Love.

"I remember that Miss Evelyn Underhill once spoke of a little street arab as having his outlook bounded 'at one end by the Crystal Palace and at the other by a policeman.' The outlook of the modern novelist is at present bound on the one hand by a sex intrigue, and on the other by the tomb.

"If anyone tells me that this is not as a fact the national outlook at the moment, I can but reply as Ruskin did to the people who said they did not like mountains—by 'telling these grovelling persons that they are wrong.'

"To such a period of taste there must succeed a sharp reaction. The revolt is bound to come. Soon it must occur to some young genius that to succumb to temptation is as easy as falling off a roof, and that there must be more interest in watching someone climb, than in seeing them always rolling downhill. So, in the fine words of Lewis Rand :

"I, with a thought like a gonfalon furled
That waits for the hour when the bells shall be
rung,

Sit pondering the gleam on the brow of the world,
Flashed from the fields that for ever are
young."

W. H. CHESSON

"IN trying to imagine the future of fiction," wrote Mr. Chesson, the well-known critic, "one should start with a precise idea of what fiction essentially is.

"If we define it as an artificial method of providing the sensation of excitedly living in or with others, we cannot be far wrong. Whether our fiction be 'scientific,' detective, evangelical, cynical, political, or romantic, whether the aim of the writer be to sugar a pill, present a reform bill to the unassembled parliament of desultory readers, or simply to coax them along paths of dreamland, the vitality of every novel is that of people seen and heard in the mind of the reader.

"Granting, then, that novels are read because they create illusions of interesting people, the future of the novel depends mainly upon two factors: first, Will or will not something supersede the novel? ; secondly, In what way can the novel evolve ?

"The first question it is safe to answer in the negative, while allowing that cinema and talking machines in collaboration may, by devices conceivable since the telegraphing of pictures became possible, simultaneously regale Hodge in his country cottage and Wilfred o' London in his metropolitan flat. For, after all, one picks up a novel anywhere.

" My hope is a bird divinely credulous of eye and stout of wing, but it does not quite see the average man enjoying the perfection of theatrical illusions while reclining in his bath or waiting his turn in the Probate Office at Somerset House.

" At the present time no one expects to see the average person making intellectual capital of his involuntary leisure. If that were so—if, as he waited for a train, one man was building thought-forms of success à la Prentice Mulford, and another learning Italian or (perchance) the King's English—what a glowing sight a great railway terminus or even Hammer-smith Broadway would be to the spiritual eye !

" But no, the average human being is a would-be sipper of honey, uneasily conscious of a higher self beckoning ; and the novel is not only, in one form or another, his pastime, it is actually his nepenthe, by means of its heroes and ministering angels, its moonlight and limelight, its cynicism and optimism, its whetting of curiosity and discreet appeals to the passion that ruins rosebuds while it is life at the root of the rose.

" The novel has a future right enough until the right man and the right woman are always together, and even then the right woman may have some reason for reading fiction to an unduly ' practical ' being.

" Admitting, then, that the novel is safe unless the resources of human satisfaction are lavishly increased, what would be the nature of its evolution ?

" In the drama we can distinctly perceive the result of an evolutionary process without going to art as primitive as the graceless illustrations of early chivalrous romances.

" It would be absurd to call the art of Euripides and Æschylus primitive, but we cannot read their tragedies without at once perceiving that mere words and the sound of them enjoyed a prestige some hundreds

of years B.C., which was not theirs after a 'practical' public issued the hideous command, 'Cut the cackle and come to the 'osses.'

"There remains the question: What are the 'osses'? In other words, What is it that the public asks of drama, of fiction? The answer is immediate: The sensation of vivid interest in flesh and blood in motion, not a sensation of what events can do to stimulate the tongues of rhetoricians or philosophers or poets.

"To the vast majority of novel readers, a kiss, an elopement, a divorce, are interesting though the heavens fall, so long as the celestial bodies do not fall on them. For them the novel has evolved enough which brings them into the closest contact, possible for such a medium to obtain for them, with the objects of their curiosities and desires.

"I do not think that war or the sufferings of the unemployed make any difference in the general taste in art. But populations are so enormous that even particular publics are sometimes very large. For instance, the public for such men—thinkers and writers of genius—as H. G. Wells, M. P. Shiel, Bernard Shaw, Algernon Blackwood, is very large, yet it is not the general public, for these men are very far from the ideal of that public.

"The public wants the tale without the 'cackle.' A waiter turned novelist should be a real 'best seller.'

"To conclude. I think the novel of the future will be the nearest thing to a meal of care-obliterating sensations."

UPTON SINCLAIR

MR. UPTON SINCLAIR replied by letter to my inquiries as follows :—

“ I can only venture a hope, and that is that the novel will cease to deal exclusively with the exploiting classes, and will devote itself more and more to the useful members of society.

“ Also I hope that it will gradually escape from the spell of the sham ethics of privilege, and will come to deal more and more with the realities of life and the actual facts of the relationship of men with one another.

“ I realise that these last words are capable of a double interpretation, and I should be willing to accept both interpretations ; that is, I would be glad to see the novel deal less exclusively with the mating period of man and woman, and more and more with other human relationships.”

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

WHEN requested to give her opinion on the future of the novel, Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith said :—

“ I do not think that any modern development, like that of Miss Dorothy Richardson, will survive as a separate expression in literature : it will only survive in so far as it influences the main stream of novel-writing.

“ Gradually the author, as commentator and god, is becoming merged into his own creation.

“ The value of new movements does not lie so much in themselves as in their effect upon the main stream of literature ; they are not really fundamental but are chiefly concerned with technique. The great interest shown at present in psycho-analysis and kindred subjects is only a passing influence which will leave its trace without causing any revolution.

“ Each age has its main expression. The novel has been the chief form of expression since the days of the great Victorian writers. How long it will continue in this foremost position I should not like to prophesy. Poetry and the drama have occasionally shown signs of coming back into their own, or it is possible that some new form will evolve out of the novel, just as the novel itself evolved out of the prose romance,

and the prose romance in its turn from the poetic romance, and so on back to the epic and the allegory. The Rig Veda is possibly the ancestor of 'The Old Wives' Tale.' Of what 'The Old Wives' Tale' shall be the ancestor, who can say?

"But the development of the novel is sorely hampered at present by the conditions of the publishing world. The high cost of production involved by high wages, high paper and binding prices, etc., means that a publisher cannot afford to launch a book unless he is sure of a large sale. This state of affairs has a threefold effect on literature. It limits the publication of books to authors of (1) superlative merit, (2) obvious 'selling qualities,' and (3) established reputation. The first, of course, is all to the good. One could not quarrel with the present state of affairs if it meant only that bad and mediocre work was excluded. Unfortunately there are also the second and third classes of writers, who are safe to reach their 5,000 copies sale, either owing to some special interest attached to their works—a topical subject, perhaps an unsavoury one, the portrayal under a thin veil of some well-known character—or owing to the fact that their names are well known to the general public, who will buy their works with the same sort of confidence as it buys a trusted brand of cocoa or whisky.

"Both these classes do little good to the novel. The first makes for what is merely passing and meretricious, the second tends to formality and repetition. Well-known writers tend to repeat their successes, and the body of literature becomes anaemic for want of fresh blood.

"The publisher and the author are not really to blame for this. One may imagine that it is the former's duty occasionally to take risks for the sake of talent, but it would be difficult to prove his obligation. He is a tradesman and he must consider his

firm. Nor can one blame the author of average position for not risking his sales, and possibly his publication, by some new and startling variation on the theme his public has come to expect. The blame partly lies with the public itself. If people would pay 8s. 6d. for a novel with the same readiness as they pay it for a dress-circle seat at a theatre, or even if they would make it possible for the libraries to buy more largely by paying an increased subscription, instead of insisting that the modern library shall continue at practically pre-war rates, then they would give a chance to that interesting class of writers, who, without being geniuses or likely to become popular, yet have a vital contribution to the evolution of the novel. We want more 'first novels' on the market, and a keener interest in them on the part of both the public and the critics.

"There is a great danger at present that the novel may share the fate of Association football and become commercialised. That would probably mean the end of it as a force in literature, and its future rests not only with the novel-writers but with the novel-readers, who have it in their power to decide whether it shall continue in the main-stream of literary progress, or stagnate in some backwater till its dullness and its rankness make it necessary to rid the world of it. We are nowhere near anything so bad as that at present, but in considering the future of the novel it is just as well to look far ahead."

MARJORIE BOWEN

“THE future of the novel surely depends on the strength of its own vitality,” said Miss Bowen, “and the vitality of any creative work depends on the amount of imagination it possesses, or impulsive fancy, or inherent passion and emotion, and the power of expressing these which we call genius.

“Without this, or at least a touch of it, all cleverness and industry are useless, and the novel can only survive as a living force if it continues to be the means chosen by people of genius to express themselves. It is more than possible that they will seek other mediums ; the novel has become too popular, too easy, too debased, too much discerned, for it to greatly attract a rare or choice spirit. Almost anyone can write a semi-autobiography, filled by the sordid details of everyday life, and most people can jot down some experience of their own coloured by some emotion more or less sincerely felt—for the form of the novel is very loose and there is a very large public willing to read, as a passing diversion, any work which deals with things that have come within their own experience, if these are put forward with any startling dictum or daring turn of speech.

“The insatiable curiosity we all possess about

ourselves ensures a certain public even for the most indifferent of novels.

“ But where among these huddled crowds of works of fiction that come and go from the library shelves does one find the touch of imagination, of genius, the hall-mark of the creative artist ?

“ Exact workmanship, astonishing ability, deft management of perilous themes, keen observation—these are common enough ; but only once, now and then, do we find the real thing—the touch of the divine, the glimpse of the Godhead.

“ ‘ Wuthering Heights ’ is probably worth all the novels written by women ever since the death of Emily Brontë—and yet by this steady flood of mediocrity it has been almost entirely swamped and submerged.

“ The danger of the modern novel seems to me to be this violent trend towards realism—so-called. Of course there is not any such thing as this ‘ realism.’ The word used in this sense—a photograph of a Dublin slum—is no more ‘ real ’ than Michael Angelo’s statue of the Duke of Urbino. Zola is not more true to life than ‘ The Fairy Queen,’ but this violent reaction towards depicting the sordid, the commonplace, the ugly, the usual, in itself a good thing in as far as it revolted from the academic falseness of the so-called ‘ romantic ’ school, (here again it is a misnomer—it was not ‘ romance ’ but merely bad work), has now gone too far and will, if unchecked, kill all that, from the time of Blandello, has been worth while in fiction.

“ As in painting the revolt from David and Ingres has finally resulted in the eccentricities of Ricasso or Matino and the intelligent, balanced mind turns in disgust from both, so a sane judgment must be equally wearied by the meandering of a Lytton or the ramblings of—any of our ultra-modern novelists.

“ The novel requires the *strong*, the *emotion*, beauty

of presentment—imagination—‘ the little more ’ than ordinary life.

“ It should be loyal to truth, yet touched by the glow of fancy, faithful to the depicting of ordinary humanity, yet opening the door on to realms that are not of this world.

“ This quality is rarely met with in Anglo-Saxon novels, and calls to mind several examples from recent continental fiction. Henri Voudoyer has this quality of pure imagination touching and transfiguring everyday life—as witness that wonderful book, ‘ Les Permissions de Clement Bellin,’ and so has Grazia Deledda, as exemplified in her story, ‘ La Madre.’

“ I regard both these books as models of what novelists should strive for if their novels are to survive.”

MAX PEMBERTON

“ FICTION is the art of telling tales,” remarked Mr. Pemberton. “ In this connection it must be observed that the great adventure story writers have always emphasised the heroic. I think that the heroic is still as necessary in fiction as it was formerly. The heroic is the essence of adventure. Probably, on the whole, more permanence has been obtained by embodying the heroic than in any other way. In ‘ Madame Bovary,’ for instance, you have got a woman striving against the destiny of a particularly monotonous life, but in that woman you have the heroic quality, because she is striving after the great things which belong to a world outside her sphere. In my opinion, the greatest novels in the French language are ‘ Madame Bovary ’ and ‘ Cousine Bette.’

“ I am one of those who regret—and am not afraid to say so—the disappearance of the ‘ make believe ’ in which the old masters revelled. I regret the impossible people of G. P. R. James’ ‘ Horsemen on the Fabulous Hill.’ While I have the most profound admiration for the really great realistic novels—like ‘ Madame Bovary,’ ‘ Cousine Bette,’ ‘ Germinal,’ and those of Thomas Hardy (perhaps Hardy above all)—the so-called ‘ psychology ’ of our own day seems to

me mostly unimaginative twaddle. Young men write about impossible sexual situations and, having no invention at all, fall back for their quarry upon the baser reports in the daily papers. This, if you please, is called 'psychology,' and we are asked to believe that there is something great in this kind of art, and that it is revolutionary. No doubt, the present interest in real psychology is exceedingly valuable, and ultimately may influence us all enormously in our judgment of human motives, but I do not think it has actually so far been of much use to the novelist, and I very much doubt if any man writing to-day has really made a close study of the very science about which he talks so glibly. I happen to have done so for reasons quite apart from my work, yet I cannot observe, at present, how the knowledge I have acquired is going to help me, unless I am to make my books in future mere medical treatises.

"We have, in my opinion, far too little romance nowadays. There is no great creative art. No man invents for us a 'Robinson Crusoe,' a 'Don Quixote,' a 'Musketeer' or a 'Lady of the Camelias.' The reader of to-day can rarely pick up a volume and discover a world different from his own in which he would like to live. In the view of the new school, it would be quite wrong to create such a world for him, since none such exists, and all that man may hope for is to witness the dying agonies of the lady who has taken the wrong turning. This cheery literature I find everywhere, and it is called 'great art.'

"I wonder if there is a man with courage enough to say that, in the main, it is flapdoodle which will be swept away by posterity like the dead leaves of autumn.

"We must get back to the endeavour to invent stories. A story is largely a contest of will. Drama results from the clash of opposing wills. And unless we recover the power of invention in which the great writers of the past excelled, we shall lose all per-

ception of what fiction really is. The fiction of the present day, when it is not a medical treatise, is a pursuit of the obvious. People are married, divorced, and put into a novel. The novelist gets eight and six, and the innocent party to the divorce gets remarried in the Savoy Chapel.

"About twenty-five years ago I was told by a prominent theatrical manager of the day that there would never again be a drama of the 'cape-and-sword' variety, and within two months at least half a dozen 'cape-and-sword plays' were being performed successfully at the leading theatres.

"The romance revival, which is now due, will be an extraordinary force. When the reaction *does* come at last, it will come with a sweep which will carry everything before it. A promising sign in this direction is the success of plays like 'The Wandering Jew,' and J. M. Barrie's 'Mary Rose.' But it may take ten years for the reactionary tide to reach its full strength."

ALEC WAUGH

“ DURING the last fifteen years the English novel has been under the influence of Romain Rolland’s ‘ Jean Christophe,’ ” said Mr. Alec Waugh. “ A big man often has a bad effect on his disciples, and I think Romain Rolland has on his. He has started the formless, plotless novel that begins with a fairly minute analysis of adolescence and then gets lost in a photograph of the period without much action or development of character. ‘ Jean Christophe’ has made a lot of people think there is no need to tell a story, but it is rather interesting to note that ‘ Jean Christophe’ itself contains the finest proof by example that the story is the highest point dramatic narrative can reach. For Rolland has himself written in ‘ Jean Christophe’ one perfect story—the Sabine episode, which stands out perfectly clear when the rest of the book becomes blurred. It is far and away the finest part of the novel and proves the superiority of a good story over a good study of social conditions. Social conditions are after all transient, but a story deals with human instincts and affections, and is universal. A story like ‘ David and Bathsheba’ can never grow old. And the Sabine incident is the only part of ‘ Jean Christophe’ that will be of any interest to the people of 1980.

"It is much easier to describe the clothes that a person is wearing than to reveal the mind of the same person. And a study of social conditions is usually a description of the clothes that men and women are wearing at a certain date and does not reveal universal emotions of individual men and women. Francis Brett Young's story, 'The Tragic Bride,' is far more likely to stand the test of time than his careful panorama, 'The Black Diamond.'

"There has been a great deal of discussion about the work of Miss Dorothy Richardson, but good though it is, I do not think it is likely to prove more than a very small by-path in English fiction. The fact that it is a by-path makes it none the less interesting. Miss Richardson is doing a very small thing as well as it could possibly be done, but her methods of the analysis of impressions could only appeal to a small number of writers. One cannot imagine a writer with a big mind and a big range being attracted by them.

"A good deal is said on the subjects of realism and romance, but after all the two are very often labels and nothing more. Gautier, for instance, would probably be called an idealist, and Maupassant a realist, but their view of life was similar and they were probably inspired by the same motive, namely, a sense of disenchantment. In Gautier it took what is commonly called an idealistic form. In 'Mademoiselle de Maupin' he gave a picture of what he would like life to be, although he knew it was very different and never expected it to be much else. He wrote out of a dissatisfaction with things as they are. Maupassant wrote out of the same feeling, but he relieved his dissatisfaction with a picture of things exactly as they are. One might say that Gautier and Maupassant walked along the same road together for a long way and then parted at a turning—but it was the same road for both of them and it is hardly possible to divide them."

GERTRUDE PAGE

"It seems to me," said Gertrude Page, "that the future of the novel must be influenced to a great extent by the price of the novel. I think that the price will keep up, and that therefore fewer and fewer novels will be published. And those that are published will have to give the reader something to carry away.

"If the price remains high, it is probable that the public will become more and more discriminating in what they buy. They will choose a book from which they can garner some thought or some point of view which it will give them pleasure to retain in their minds.

"One hopes devoutly that there will be a little more laughter in the novels of the future. I attribute my own success very largely to the fact that my readers say to me: 'Your books cheer me up so. I always read them when I have a fit of the blues.'

"This is more significant in view of the fact that the general reading public are not as a rule very partial to the novel about a country they have never seen. After ten years of hard work, my publishers always implore me to write about Rhodesia. This I attribute largely to the laughter and the homely

situations, coupled with the deep thoughts one gleans from the open veldt.

“ Most of the situations I describe are drawn from life, though my characters are made up from many varying personalities.

“ It is rather an interesting point that, though I made my name through Rhodesia, and my publishers thereafter urged me to write about Rhodesia, ‘ Paddy the Next Best Thing ’ and ‘ The Great Splendour,’ the one Irish and the other English, have beaten the Rhodesian sales. This, again, is due to the gaiety in the books, which appeals to the British public, together with a little of the sadness which is inseparable from all human existences.

“ Although the prices are likely to remain high in the first instance, I have great hopes that the day may come when we shall see the old paper-covered sixpennies back again. These were the editions that reached the workers who could afford a sixpence where they cannot afford two shillings. Failing this, I hope that all employers of labour will endeavour to help their employees to provide libraries for themselves.

“ It is sometimes complained that the reading public only buys trash, but as long as such books as ‘ The Choir Invisible,’ by James Lane Allen, continue to sell year after year in enormous numbers all over the English-speaking world, we may feel sure, I think, that the soul of the public is tuned aright.

“ I also regard it as a promising sign that there is such a growing demand for spiritualistic literature. One would like to hope that as many people as possible will seek out the truth for themselves, instead of being content with second-hand opinions—probably derived from some soul of narrow vision.

“ It is very wonderful to think how the literature of the future may be influenced from the other side.”

MAY SINCLAIR

MISS MAY SINCLAIR expressed the opinion that one of the most interesting developments of the psychological novel is the method employed by James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson ; the method, namely, of proceeding from one consciousness, and seeing and feeling everything through that consciousness, the author never adopting the attitude of God Almighty as he used to do in the ordinary traditional novel.

“ This method,” said Miss Sinclair, “ has its limitations, which perhaps those who use it best realise. That is to say, you are confined to one consciousness, you share its prejudices and its blindnesses, you know no more of the other people in the book than it knows, but you get a much more vivid and real presentation of that particular character’s life than you would by standing outside it.

“ There are ways of circumventing these awkwardnesses. All the time the author naturally does know more than his character, and he must present things so that they appear both as they really are and as they appear to the consciousness of his one subject.

“ It may be said that this method could only be applied to one kind of novel—the novel of the one predominant character. It certainly remains to be

seen whether it will be successful in dealing with groups of characters all equally important. The difficulty in this case will be to get an æsthetic unity ; but it will be worth trying for.

“ It has been objected that a novel of action could not be written from this standpoint, but that altogether depends on the kind of consciousness you start with. If you take the consciousness of a man of action, you will have all his actions in his consciousness—the only place where they immediately and intimately are. The method—whatever else may be said for it—provides a more thorough-going unity than any other, for there is nothing more fundamental than the unity of consciousness.

“ I see no end to the psychological development of the novel on these lines, but the method might not lend itself, for example, to certain forms of comedy. The reason is that the very essence of the comic is the incongruity between things as they are and things as they appear to consciousness.

“ The whole point of the comedy of ‘ The Egoist ’ is in the difference between Sir Willoughby Patterne, as he appeared to Clara Middleton and George Meredith, and Sir Willoughby as he appears to himself.

“ And to uphold this difference the author must be the absolute spectator of the two Willoughbys ; he must, in fact, be the absolute outside spectator of his own creations. That is the difference between comedy and tragedy. Comedy allows you to be slightly more diffuse, less concentrated, less intense, to play round and round your subject.

“ It can be said that all this may be true, and that there is nothing very new in it. The novelists who know their business—the great novelists—have always worked from the inside of their characters, and have always been one with them, but they have also always been the outside spectator.

“ And that attitude, so far as it is perceptible to

the reader, interferes more or less with a direct presentation of the subject. You are aware of the author all the time. This is especially so with the analytic novel of the past. The modern novelist should not dissect; he should not probe; he should not write about the emotions and the thoughts of his characters. The words he uses must be the thoughts—be the emotions.

“ I think that the analytic psychological novel is becoming a thing of the past; that the synthetic psychological novel is taking its place, and there can be little doubt that it has a future before it.”

DOROTHY RICHARDSON

Miss DOROTHY RICHARDSON wrote as follows :—

“ All kinds of novels should have, if we keep our balance on the rope, a far wider acceptance, in the immediate future, than ever in the past. If we do not keep our balance, the future of the novel, though wide, is indefinitely remote.

“ Romance telling of fairies or demons in the woods, and of giants and pygmies amongst humanity, people we should like or hate to be, willing and acting on a stage that holds our eyes by its size or by its remoteness, or both, will still afford us, in the hands of a master, the vast recreation of vicarious living, expansion of consciousness, ennoblement, or a wholesome despair.

“ Realism, substituting ‘ nature-study ’ for the fairies and demons of the woods, and the average man in average circumstances for the giants and pygmies on the vast stage, has unprecedented opportunities of expansion, since it marches always with the times ; its stress being upon environment, whether of circumstance or of given individual character ; and its sources—chiefly science, notably the science of psychology—perpetually redescribing character, and the movement of events, perpetually reconstructing environment, were never so active as they are to-day.

“ The third form of the novel, still in its infancy, whose exponents are unable to accept either the demons and fairies of romance or the ‘ facts ’ of ‘ nature-study ’ as adequate accounts of the world, and place their emphasis on the individual, whether ‘ average ’ or exceptional, will continue to hold writer and reader at home in the universal marvel of existence. It may be described either as a reaction from realism, though within it realism finds its fullest æsthetic development, or as a new birth of romance ; romance at last become real and brought home to stay. For just as it is realism at its fullest æsthetic development, so also it is romance in its simplest, truest form. Where it reaches its aim, it weaves for the reader the eternal romance of *his* own existence and demonstrates that æsthetic recreation is to be had not only by going far enough out, but also by coming near enough home. So far, only rough outlines have been drawn. Its first masterpiece will at once reveal the possibilities and confound, as a masterpiece always will confound, exact classification. For the great masters of the early form of romance are also realists, and the few masterpieces of realism are pure romance. It may be that the immediate development of the more recent experiments will produce an old-pattern, three-volume novel with the unities holding sway as never before, in its midst one person, one spot of earth, one moment of time. But the possibilities are various, and as they are worked out the new form will be found to be, not in opposition, but related to, throwing into relief, sometimes amplifying and interpreting, what has gone before.”

BART KENNEDY

“THE novel that is worthy of the name is a magical, moving picture,” said Mr. Bart Kennedy. “You may pick it up and start the machinery of it going whenever you like. And you may lay it down when the spirit moves you. It is yours to command. It may transport you through scenes of wonder. Or it may lay bare the subtlest workings of the human mind. For you—the reader—the one whose mind is linked with it, it evokes ideas and scenes and excitements and thrills. The magical signs that are on the page present them to you, and pass them before your eyes.

“Good novels—bad novels—indifferent novels. Who is to define or to place them? No one. For what is bad for you is good for another. The novel that *I* may delight in may bore *you* to death. The old saying that goes to the effect that what is one man’s meat is another man’s poison is true, especially of the novel.

“The critic of the novel is simply one who does not know and who puts down what he does not know in an authoritative manner. He runs a bluff in an academic style. There have been splendid novels written by people who were not as nicely balanced

in their upper storey as they might have been. There have been thrilling and exciting and adventurous novels written by people who have never stirred a yard away from their own doorsteps, so to speak. Maiden ladies have written profound stories concerning the very full life. Salacious novels have been written by women whose private characters were absolutely beyond reproach. And here I would like to remark in passing that Zola, who was one of the most unclean writers who ever spoiled paper, was a highly respectable person. The truth of the matter is that the critic of the novel who knows what is what, and why is why, is merely a daring person who—to use a slangy idiom—chances his arm. He is one who gets guineas on lofty high-brow, classy, false pretences.

“ There has been a good deal written to the effect that the novel is a picture of the life that surrounds the person who has been guilty of the said novel. This is funny. The novel—and the best at that—is simply a picture of life as seen through a certain individual’s eyes. That individual may be a most squint-eyed person ; or he may be one who is not quite right in the head ; or he may be a gentleman of criminal tendencies ; or he may be a person of grand and noble character. But, whatever he may be, if a book has in it the mysterious something that holds interest, it will be read eagerly by those who are in mental consonance with him.

“ However, in novel-writing there is—when all is said and done—a playing of the game. There is something that ought not to be done. And that something is that books ought not to be written in a suggestive and salacious manner just for the purpose of selling. Certain men are doing this now, and it is a low-down thing to do. And when anything is said to them they have the hypocrisy and effrontery to protest to the effect that everything should be

illumined by art. At that rate, a refuse-heap would be a fitting subject for artistic treatment. One would have more respect for these men if they were honest enough to admit that they dealt in salacity and uncleanness just in order to make money.

"But bad and low-down though these men are, there are women who are worse. There are women in England to-day whose books are a scandal. They write vile and unclean books just to make money.

"The novel in itself is a magical and wonderful thing if it is done straightly and honestly by the one who makes it. The more individual and in accord with its maker it be, the better it will be. It is a wonderful and changing picture made from the impressions of the life that surrounds him. It can't please everyone. It can't have effect for everyone. It will only appeal to those who are in tune with it."

* * * * *

"Yes, the novel fills a great need in our life. It takes us out of ourselves. It lifts us up when we are cast down. It cheers us when we are sad and lonely. It is the most wonderful of all the devices that have been invented for the amusement and the interesting of man. This book that you open! These magical signs that carry you off into far, strange places! Yes, this book is indeed a wonderful thing.

"And let it be kept clean. Let it not be defiled by those whose only object in the attempting to make it is to see how closely they can sail to the wind in their endeavour to make money."

BASIL CREIGHTON

“WHAT is a novel?” asked Mr. Creighton. “A few months ago a reviewer let slip in his agony the verdict that incident counted for more in the novel than ‘characterisation’ and we may hope that it eased the burden of his pain. At any rate some such or any such remark will serve to lay bare that complex organism as with a scalpel and to expose the nature of the beast. We see at once that incident is the heart, the liver and the reins. Without incident the creature could neither live nor move. A novel in fact is a story. Incident duly compacted and compounded is a plot. There lies the claim to the title of an art. If it does not tell a story to what domain of art can the novel possibly claim to belong? And hence the future of the novel would seem to lie in its continuing vitality as the art of telling stories.

“And yet—this is lip service to a truism—the novel is not so easily to be caught. For though it be granted that the plot is nine-tenths of the business, yet it is true also that it is the remaining tenth which engrosses the other nine. This odd beast is found to develop more vitality from a supernumerary organ which ought to play a minor part, than from all the others on which it ought chiefly to rely. The novel

resembles that Australian bird which has used its legs to such purpose that its wings have become useless stumps. It is a bird and it ought to fly, or at least to flap its wings, but it contrives to prolong its existence on legs which almost rival wings in the power of eluding pursuit.

“ From early times in its career the novel began to provide for a time when the glory of being an art might become a nuisance. Indeed its mixed parentage and casual upbringing have given it in England particularly a certain indifference to the patronage of the muses. It may be told that it was born to tell stories and that if it does it well it may be called an art, but had it listened to these blandishments it would by this time have exhausted its power to survive. Arts have their moments, but they are costly and soon exhaust the genius of men. How many good stories, how many stories of which the plot is nine-tenths have been written? Not a great number, probably. As an art in this stricter sense the novel would attract little attention except at rare intervals or in a great period or two. It would hang on in between—as in fact the detective story or the story of adventure does hang on, waiting for its Conan Doyle or its Stevenson.

“ But by a process of adaptation and mutation the novel as it actually is eludes the pursuit of dictums or of dicta, however sound. It grows on out of itself, submerging and treading down its past, indifferent so long as the species lives whether or no it throws off perfect examples of its kind which shall inherit eternity.

“ How is this impudence achieved? By what alchemy does the novel transfer to the species the immortality which in other arts is the aspiration of the individual work?

“ The truth seems to be that the novel is scarcely an art at all. It is not the mere statement and re-

statement of a diminishing perfection, the constant re-issue of a fading stamp. It is not the often repeated Venus of Praxiteles, or Virgin and Child, or the multiplication of sonnets by virtue of the Petrachian model. It preserves no unities and has no traditions calling for hectic revolt. There is no post-impressionism of novels. A novel cannot be cubed. For it cannot outdo itself. It cannot outrage itself. For it is always giving birth to itself as the last outrage.

“ By discarding art altogether the novelist eludes the law of art’s decay. His art too strictly seen would have become a poisoned shirt or a dead husk within which his life would have shrunk away. But as it is, he is free. ‘ My wings,’ he says, or may come to say, ‘ have long been useless, but see how I run.’ And with that he darts forth into almost illimitable horizons. He feeds for a while in local dialects and manners, and is gone. You find him next in the aquatic flats of drab emotions. Social theory may nourish him next or the paradoxical delights of morals or the scandals of packing meat. ‘ Nihil humanum’ he cries, and before you can look he is gaily revelling in his own inside, himself the vulture and himself the god in chains. Then there are the landslides of ‘ good taste,’ and the novelist finds a rich field in the lapse of reticence. But reticence is a relative term and as it recedes new vistas open calling for exploration. There is all life and all that is done in it. He will show you the workings of every kind of thing and the ethics of every kind of emotion. And again, though life may be sane and ordered on the whole, this lively showman can make it shine again and hold up to it funny mirrors which show it all awry.

“ The future of the novel in fact is the future of life, of life as it is and as it isn’t, as it will be and as it won’t be. So long as there is religion there will be sermons and so long as there is life there will be

novels, granted that the novel accepts itself and is accepted as life's commentary. Plot, construction, the formulæ of art, might be nine-tenths of the novel if the novel did not engross for itself nine-tenths of life, and 'characterisation' might count for less in the novel than incident if people were not infinitely more various than the incidents which can possibly befall them. Marriage is a good incident, but it would surely long since have played out its part in fiction if the people who marry were not the mainstay of the matter. Those who say of novels 'Give me a good plot' remind one of the offer of £5,000 for a hippopotamus trained to rival Norah of the Nile, the most wonderful performing animal in existence. They either know that they ask a lot, or else they do not know what they ask. And the novelist who calls himself an artist with any rigour forgets that he is calling in a standard which would long ago have restricted, if not crushed out, the fellowship to which he belongs. If his forerunners had taken art to wife, who would be their children and where would be the lusty brood? There are, of course, dangers to the novel in being so terrifically prolific. Not long ago one novelist or two served the nation, and one is told that Anthony Trollope monopolised the book-stalls. But that is a further question. To-day, at any rate, every section, grade and shade of the community has its novelist, and for many novelists the future of the novel may be—'For every novel a reader or two.' "

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

WHEN asked his opinion about the novel of the future, Mr. Eden Phillpotts, in a letter, gave expression to these views :—

“ I cannot predict with any confidence what evolution has in store for the novel, seeing I know not the changes in taste that lie ahead. The novel must continue to be entertaining if it is to endure ; but who shall say what our children’s children will regard as entertainment ? Education is largely modifying the standards and amusement values, and science is confounding art. The novel must be brave and face tremendous adventures—chiefly down-hill.

“ Perhaps novel and stage play are destined to merge into moving pictures, with phonographic accompaniment and colour added. The concoction, having passed moral tests, would be streamed into our private homes with the electricity and water—assuming, of course, that under communism the private house will be still a part of life and that art of some sort will also be permitted to linger on.”

ANTHONY HOPE

ACCORDING to Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins the novel is always the reflection of the state of society at any given period. "To prophesy the future of the novel," he remarked, "is to prophesy the future of society."

"The two prominent movements abroad," continued Sir Anthony, "representing the social unrest and the feminine unrest, are voiced in the novels of to-day. Most of the successes of the younger novelists have represented either the insurgent poorer, or lower, classes rebelling against their economic positions, or else the rebellion of women against the limitations attached by convention to their sex. And probably this will continue to be the note of the modern novel for some time to come.

"One criticism of this might be that it is too strong a reaction against the sort of society which Thackeray treated of. People are not uninteresting because they happen to be well off or to mix in public affairs. And there are younger novelists who recognise this; for example, Mr. Stephen McKenna.

"Another criticism of what may be called the Movement School of Fiction is that the characters are rather apt to become merely the creatures of the movements and not real individuals themselves.

That is to say, they go through a number of episodes and experiences which illustrate, often very clearly, the trend of events and feelings, but they themselves are little more than passive recipients and do not stand out as real people themselves. So far as that tendency exists, it results rather in what is called realism than in what is called romance, because romance consists mainly in an assertion of the freedom and the power of the individual, while realism consists mainly in presenting him as one of a multitude, willingly or unwillingly acting in subjection to external circumstances.

"The realistic tendency is, on the whole, predominant at the present moment. This fact is again reflected in the idea that there is something superficial about comedy, because comedy, like romance, is based upon the free action of the will, while tragedy is an unsuccessful struggle against fate.

"It is probable that a short time will witness a revival in fiction of the romantic spirit, though not, perhaps, until social conditions are more favourable.

"If the masses of the people attain to happier conditions of life, they will be more able to develop their character and individualities, and the novelists who spring from them will in their writing reflect this change by giving greater importance to the play and power of the individual will."

CONSTANCE HOLME

“THE future of the novel is surely absolutely co-existent with the future of humanity,” wrote Miss Constance Holme, “because it has become the supreme vehicle of expression on the part of humanity. At this period of upheaval, therefore, it is just as difficult to prophesy about one as about the other. If the world continues to inquire into the why and wherefore of things, the novel will doubtless increase in numbers and scope in order both to voice and to answer that inquiry. If the demand for knowledge narrows down, the novel also will narrow down; but the former seems to me far more likely. All around we are restless brains, asking the reason of everything under the sun, and the novel happens to be the easiest and most alluring—if not necessarily the most reliable—method of dealing with human problems.

“This confidence in the continuance of the novel may seem extreme in the present circumstances, but it is justified by statistics. In spite of the agonies of the publishers, for instance, their *Circular* announces an exceptionally large increase in fiction for 1920. The War, too, was expected to kill the novel, at least temporarily, but I think I am right in saying that it

did it very little harm. Unless it is at the moment rushing to a destruction of which a country-domiciled author is unaware it should continue to flourish as long as the human need for it exists.

“Growth of thought, expansion of education and experience all contribute to power of expression, the desire for which, however unconscious, is always present in the human breast. If I could only say what I mean!—there is no cry more constant on the human lips. As more and more people become conscious of this desire and the power to satisfy it, more and more shall we have them breaking out into the printed word. And that printed word is likely to be the word of the novel, because, as I have said, it is the most human form of expression. It has the endless scope of humanity, its greatness and its pettiness, its drama and its serenity, its dark places and its soaring spiritualities. The novel will rise and fall with human nature because it is rooted in it. It is flesh of its flesh and bone of its bone, while at its best it becomes also the incarnate spirit of man, which lives on long after the flesh and bone of his generation have perished and gone.

“We have also to remember that the novel is becoming more and more the recognised means of escape from the growing pressure of existence. Minds that think are only too apt to be also minds that are afraid, and that require a new heaven and a new earth either of their own creating or somebody else's. The immense demand of the class that once scarcely read for all novels of the ‘popular’ order, is in itself a sign that the soul is stirring in its sleep. Asking for a drug, perhaps, that it may sleep again, or at the best, for a world of false delights in which it may lose its consciousness of unease; but still asking. And at countless points through the veil of sentimentality with which this class of writing seems to be stifling the masses, brighter spirits are lifting their

little lamps for a spark from the altars of the true literature.

“Confidence, however, in the increased persistence of the novel does not necessarily presuppose confidence in its increased perfection. On the contrary, with both creation and demand coming in so many cases from raw, untrained minds, we are likely to have for some time a greater aggregate of inferior products. The novel will follow the trend of its time as the hand follows the glove, and that trend is not artistically upwards. The very qualities that will keep the novel alive—its scope and humanity—will militate against its artistic growth. Nevertheless, there will always be artists, even if they seem fewer in numbers than ever because of the greater mass of others around them. Always there will be lone souls urged by the thirst for perfection, willing to scorn delights and live laborious days.

“At least we may hope that, after our late stirring with the spoon of war, we may perceive a greater sense of universality, that quality so conspicuous by its absence in the novel of to-day. Surely it is time that the realist, intent on his ‘slice of life,’ and the idealist, intent on his slice of fairyland or Heaven, should combine to open each other’s eyes? The idealist has the sense of the universe the more strongly of the two, but unfortunately it is generally the wrong universe. The realist is so busy dissecting his slice of life that he forgets that body he has cut it out of. It is time that the novelist should look not only more distinctly at things as they are, but at a great many more of them. It is amazing from how many novels one receives the impression that their authors have never heard of the country or the sea, of any history whatsoever, and least of all of the innumerable forms of toil upon which mankind is engaged. The romance of work is one that writers neglect largely on the whole, in spite of the fact

that to many men—and women—it stands for their whole lives. In the novel of the future it would be cheering to see a great consciousness of background as well as of the artistic value of toil. Toil, however, is not a subject that we mention in England, just now! It is *vieux jeu*. And yet (all my above prosing apart), what honest novelist but will admit that, except for the 'joy of the working,' there would be little real *raison d'être* for the novel at all? "

W. B. MAXWELL

MR. W. B. MAXWELL is of opinion that there is no doubt whatever that the novel *has* a future.

“It is not going to be withered by the lightning flash of the cinema lantern,” he said, “or crushed out of existence by the rollers that print the daily illustrated newspapers. The very people who nowadays seem to be all eyes and no ears suddenly drop a curtain on the external world in order to listen to the magic whisper that issues from the pages of a book. They do it in the most incongruous places too—on the tops of omnibuses, in the corridors of Government offices, in the lifts of Tube railways. ‘Look at that girl,’ says the matronly representative of an earlier generation. ‘I took her to Madame Tussaud’s yesterday; she’s going to the pantomime this evening; and yet there she is at her book again.’

“And a book, it may be added, in common parlance *is* a novel.

“No, novel-reading has become a national habit—a far stronger habit than that of sweet-sucking, jazz-dancing,—or even cigarette-smoking. For instance, among girls at least, cigarette-smoking is on the decrease; whereas, with both sexes, novel-reading is always increasing. Literally an army of men con-

firmed themselves in the habit during the war ; for all read novels while on active service—in rest camps, in Y.M.C.A. huts, in the trenches themselves.

“ But if one has no doubt as to the future of the novel, one may well be doubtful in regard to the novel of the future. In this respect I speak with extreme diffidence, because I have made many prophecies on the subject ; and, like most modern prophets, I have been wrong every time. Called upon to hold forth to a company of brother writers about ten years ago, I ventured to predict that the psychological novel must be the novel of the future. In using this much disliked adjective I did not mean to plead for long-winded analysis, cumbrous introspection, or morbidity of any sort ; I meant only that real success would not be achieved by any novel that did not make its main appeal for interest in the tracing of states of mind. In other words, that readers must have puppets that *thought* and *felt*, and that they would not any longer put up with puppets that merely acted. But in making this shot I was completely off the target. A dozen boisterous successes every publishing season showed how immensely fond the world still was of adventure, plot, and fantastic intrigue.

“ While the war lasted, I prophesied that peace would usher in a new vigorous school of romantic novelists.

“ It seemed to me quite obvious that a universe oppressed for so long by hideous realities must crave for the realm of pure imagination. Novelists, to be successful, must strike a note of gaiety, of sheer joyousness, in response to the cry of ‘ Make us forget.’ ‘ Away with drab tales of ordinary life, its sordid pains, its colourless pleasures. Take us out of ourselves, lift us up, carry us to fairyland.’ But here again I was hopelessly wrong. The seven hundred paged story of everyday life is more fashionable than ever. Some really excellent and very successful contemporary

novels leave one as sad and uncomfortable as if one had picnicked on a cold day in a deserted grave-yard.

“ At the present time, as I understand, the future of the novel is said to be jeopardised by the tremendously enhanced cost of production. Publishers themselves take a gloomy view. But as long as I can remember publishers always did take that view—at least, when they talked business. A publisher, when you meet him out at dinner, is a delightful optimistic companion, full of laughter and merry talk ; but if you go to see him to discuss your next master-piece, or to interview him on the general prospects of ‘ the trade ’ he is a terrible pessimist. Personally, after talking to publishers, I always feel that my last novel is not only *my* last novel, but *the* last novel. It has just scraped through ; but the crash is here. ‘ The trade ’ is collapsing. There will be no more novels.

“ I suppose if the published price of novels is made much higher, we shall go back to the style of circulation of the three-volume days. People will cease to buy new novels ; they will only borrow them. But will this matter ? I am myself so much an optimist, so firmly persuaded that the English-speaking race cannot get on without novels, that I believe if people cannot afford to buy and are unable to borrow novels, they will *steal* them. What an advertisement that would be. ‘ John Brown, 38, no occupation, charged with abstracting Mr. ——’s new novel, ‘ The Mountain of Love ’ ; from the publisher’s counter, pleaded guilty to the charge, and said that he had no excuse to offer, except that he could not wait for it to appear in a cheap edition.’ ”

J. D. BERESFORD

MR. J. D. BERESFORD expressed the opinion that we cannot foresee what the future may produce in the way of a great novelist, and as it may produce a man whose effect upon the novel may be very considerable, any prophecy must necessarily leave that contingency out of account.

“Generally, however,” he said, “my opinion about the novel of the near future is that the whole tendency is away from that realism which has been the main line of development of the English novel from the days of Samuel Richardson onwards.

“One reason for this opinion is that realism is, in one sense, an experiment, an experiment which, I think, has now reached its limit. If you want to press the experiment any further, you must use the film. In literature we must assume that the true record of life, so far as it can be put down in words, is the effect that life has made upon the recording consciousness. To be consistent, therefore, we must not try to portray life in any other terms. To attain an ultimate realism we must drop altogether the detached, observing method; we must not be objective, but subjective. Instead of describing the observed fact we must describe our own reactions to the fact, and so far as

may be, exclude from our record the fact itself, that is to say, the fact as it might be seen by the average witness. Two remarkable examples of this method are the 'Ulysses' of James Joyce, and the five volumes of 'Pilgrimage,' by Miss Dorothy Richardson. And I would submit that realism can go no further in this direction.

" My second reason for thinking that Realism has no great future is that we have passed through an experience in the war which has brought people out of themselves and into touch with life in a way they have never been. And that experience will certainly be continued in the future, because civilisation is in a state of flux, and it is inconceivable that in the present generation we can return to the safety and security possible in the days before the war.

" I believe that an individual secure from the threat of poverty and interference will take an interest in fiction that presents to him conditions that he will never have to suffer. In this way he achieves an extension of himself in imagination that he does not desire to get in life. But when conditions are threatening his present security, he does not wish to be reminded of that fact in his reading. An example of this was the unpopularity of war-fiction during the last years of the war. As a consequence, therefore, of the present industrial unrest, I believe that the majority of readers will seek fantasy and romance in their fiction: will seek, that is, material that takes them away from the field of their present experience, but which, nevertheless, brings out the full value of human relationships and achievement.

" But if I have no faith in the success of the realistic novel in the near future, we can look forward quite confidently to the survival of stories of love, adventure and mystery, which have a perennial value.

" The writer who can tell a story is always sure of an audience, because he deals with the fundamental

values and problems of life, apart from any particular background and setting. Next I see a possible future for the more or less religious novel. It will avoid all argument and its religious tendency may have little relation to the theology of the churches. But it will have as its first recommendation that quality which the Americans conveniently refer to as 'uplift.' I can well imagine that it will be allied to the teachings of Spiritualism.

"The real chance for the artist, however, is in supplying the needs of fantasy, which is the ordinary human being's escape from life, the imaginative complement of experience. His stories will be romantic in essence, and will embody a type rather than present the familiar individual ; he has, in fact, if he desires a wide circulation, to present so catholic a type that his fantasy will appeal to—and console the lives of—as many readers as possible. But to do this requires very great gifts of imagination, intuition, and power of expression ; the romantic, artistic achievement I have indicated is not within the reach of the average novelist.

"A propos of civilisation being in a state of flux, I may say that I am by no means alone in the belief that European civilisation is tending to disintegrate. The war quickened the process by thirty years, and the growing strength of the democratic idea will be the chief factor in maintaining it. And if I am right in this, I am certain that people who will be fighting a losing struggle with life will want to read only of success ; they will want to escape from life in their fantasies, and will find that escape mainly in Romance."

GILBERT FRANKAU

MR. GILBERT FRANKAU is a man of medium height, with a lithe, alert figure, a wide forehead, and eyes which suggest both the habitual faculty of concentration and a sense of humour. There is that about him which gives you the impression of a large reservoir of latent energy.

As one would expect from his books, Mr. Frankau is an exceedingly careful worker. He showed me a typed script of his forthcoming novel which was literally a mass of corrections.

"I am a great believer in hard work," he said. "It is the only way to get things done. I have not had a holiday for three years. I have signed a contract for a novel a year for the next ten years, and in addition I write about twelve short stories a year, besides contributing a weekly article of 2,000 words."

Mr. Frankau remarked incidentally that in his opinion all the best literary and artistic work in the world had been achieved on the spur of necessity.

"What do you think evolution has in store for the novel?" I asked.

"There are two classes of novel," replied Mr. Frankau. "There is the psychological novel, which I

should prefer to call the novel of character, and there is the story-teller's novel, or the novel of incident.

"I do not consider that the former class of novel will be able to stand up against the onrush of democracy. Democracy is as yet half-educated, and demands full-blooded tales with heroes, heroines and villains.

"Without in any way pandering to the lesser educated amongst us, I do sincerely believe that the novel of the future will have to be written by the people for the people.

"The art of story-telling is older than Homer. It is inherent in the human animal. From earliest childhood we all want to be taken out of ourselves into the realm of romance. So long as the novelist will hold this truth in his mind's eye, will eschew propaganda, and remember that a story should have a beginning, a middle and an end, I see a great future for that novelist.

"I am only young at the craft myself, so perhaps I should not be so dogmatic. Nevertheless, I do feel that our novelists of the past twenty years have been inclined to neglect the story for the characters. The older novelists, Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Fielding, and our oldest novelist, Defoe, stuck to their stories.

"It is, if I may say so, because I hold these views about story-telling that I am following Peter Jackson with a story of pure mystery and adventure,—a constructed story.

"'The Seeds of Enchantment,' as I call my new book, is an experiment. Frankly, I am not very doubtful as to its success."

Just before I left I mentioned that I was sorry to say I had not yet read "Peter Jackson."

At which Mr. Frankau airily waved his hand, saying, "Your loss, my dear sir,—your loss, not mine!" and thereupon pleasantly bade me *au revoir*.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

MISS GERTRUDE ATHERTON sent the following communication in response to my queries :—

“ In spite of moving pictures, in spite of cheap magazines (eight for the price of one novel) there is still a public for the comprehensive, deep pictures of life that only the novel can portray. If one public is more avid for sensation than ever, since the war, there is a smaller but not insignificant public that always did demand serious studies of life at first hand by men and women whose superior gifts and opportunities enable them to see in both life and human nature what is for ever hidden from the mere story-tellers. This public, which measurably increased during a war that induced serious moments in all but congenital idiots, has always rejected ‘glad stuff,’ ‘sex stuff,’ a pandering to the fashion of the moment. Now, more than ever, do people crave and demand fiction that appeals to the higher intelligence, first-hand observations of life—without moralizing and other ponderosities—a new but not bizarre point of view, life as it is, not as it should be, wit, irony, humour, and style, without those eccentricities that divert the attention from the subject matter. They might

reject the most worthy of novels if it were dull, but no master of his art (and craft) ever is dull.

“ This public will, in the nature of things, expand, and with the inevitable result that in time only the very best novels will find either publishers and public ; leaving those that have invention rather than imagination, the yarn-spinning faculty instead of the gift for interpretation of life and character, to console themselves with the magazines(which multiply like Japanese) and those moving picture producers who cater to the mob. Several producers in the United States, by the way, notably Mr. Goldwyn, have recently become inspired with the ambition to lift the Cinema from the Third Industry up to a place among the Arts. But when that blessed consummation is with us the best of the novelists will be safe, whether their work prove to be ‘ picturable ’ or not. Nothing can ever take the place of a good book.”

KATHLYN RHODES

“ THERE only appears to me to be one certainty about the future of the novel,” said Miss Kathlyn Rhodes, “ and that is, that it *has* a future. From early ages the story-teller has held an important place in the scheme of things ; and the child’s first intelligent demand has always been—Tell me a story ! Personally, I think the novel of the future will be the one which *tells a story*. . . . an interesting story, in an interesting way. The increasing demand for stories of the East, or of some sun-baked island in the South Seas proves, I think, that many people read from a desire to forget, temporarily, their own perfectly comfortable, but rather drab surroundings, to enjoy, vicariously, the experiences of more fortunate travellers, to visit, in imagination at least, the beautiful countries in which they will never set foot.

“ At the present time certain writers are endeavouring to ‘ boom ’ the purely psychological novel, as apart from the novel of incident, the novel in which there is a clear and connected plot, in other words, the novel which tells a story. The only kind of novel worth considering, they say, is the one in which a small group of characters—or, preferably, a single character—is dissected at great length, and with an often tedious minuteness of detail. The thoughts,

emotions, sensations of this character, generally a young girl, are set forth with laborious care like specimens in a laboratory, and the reader is called upon to applaud the absolute fidelity to life displayed in the presentation of these things.

“ As a rule nothing happens—beyond an unusually vivid sensation of one sort or another ; and at the end of the book the reader is worried, tired-out, jaded, as one is after a call from some dull and prosy friend, whose conversation is full of her home, her children, her ailments, and her servants. All the above are parts of what some people call ‘ real ’ life ; but there is no denying they are often mighty dull. And in the same way a ‘ human document ’ may be a very dull document. I think it was Wilkie Collins who maintained that the true purpose of the novel was to ‘ tell a story.’ I wonder what the author of ‘ The Woman in White ’ would have said to the present psycho-analytical school of novelists ?

“ The adherents of the above school will retort that a character study is of more value, from a literary point of view, than a mere narrative of happenings, romantic, bizarre, or dramatic, as the case may be. But the character which is expressed through action is generally a good deal more convincing than the character which is insisted on, reiterated, driven in, so to speak, with a sledge-hammer. In this connection Mr. Henry James says somewhere—‘ What is character but the determination of incident ? What is incident but the illustration of character ? ’ And the really notable novel is that in which incident and character are thus co-related.

“ The reading public, fortunately for novelists, is a huge one ; and the three classes into which it may, very roughly, be divided—that is the intellectual reader, the intelligent reader, and the uncritical reader—must all be provided for. Luckily no one, save the reviewer, is obliged to read anything he doesn’t like. A reader

of the first class may prefer George Meredith, one of the third—Charles Garvice ; but as a rule there is no obligation to exchange books ; and probably fresh writers will arise from time to time to supply the different demands. The cardinal sin of the writer is verbosity ; and in spite of the enormously high price of books, many novels are still of great length. One sighs sometimes for the beautiful brevity of the Biblical stories, which present a whole drama of character and incident in a few lines, or the equally terse style of the Northern Sagas where the end of a character is reported thus, without any harrowing death agonies,—

“ . . . and Gretir the Strong smote his enemy so that he died. *And now he is out of the story.* ”

ALICE PERRIN

“ WHO could venture to prophesy about anything unless gifted with second-sight, which, from the police reports, would appear sometimes to be a more or less dangerous attribute ? ” said Mrs. Perrin.

“ But as I am not at the moment gazing into a crystal or examining the lines on some prominent publisher’s hands, I may perhaps, with safety, declare that only with the end of the world will come the end of the novel ; and even then, possibly we may hope to find it, devoid of all connection with filthy lucre, in the realms described to us by the Rev. Vale Owen.

“ Of course eight or nine shillings seems an appalling price to pay for a work of imagination that may have cost the writer a year, or may be years, of hard work ; and what it has cost the publisher he and Heaven alone can say,—and sometimes he says it has cost him a vast deal more than he has bestowed upon the author who has written it.

“ But (unfortunately for me) I can well remember that period of the ‘ three decker ’ novel, which, though of no greater length than present day works of fiction, cost over thirty shillings, and even then library subscriptions were not so very much higher than they are now, when there are so many more libraries. Also,

the chances for 'first novels' seem to stand higher, considering the 'hundreds of pounds' of prizes offered by various publishing houses for the article.

" But publishers, I suppose, must live, and so, presumably, must authors, so if novels *are* to become extinct we may perhaps look for a simultaneous demise of the two ; but more likely the author would expire first, for I have never yet heard a publisher acknowledge that he depends solely on his business to keep him alive. However, let us hope for the best.

" If printers and binders and paper-makers continue to obtain the large wages and prices we hear of, it seems to me that the novel must come down in price, since it would be quite possible to produce even cheaper bindings, less good print, and more horrible paper than is being 'put out' at present ; more millions of the public would buy, and the incurable novel reader would rejoice ; such productions would also wear out more rapidly in the libraries and have to be more quickly replaced.

" The feelings of the author might suffer with such a plan (for authors are notoriously sensitive to the 'get up' of their works) but his, or more often her, pocket would find no reason to grumble ; and certainly the bookseller, who is so often accused of being the stumbling block between publisher and author, would benefit—though to an outsider it would appear easy enough for the publishing firms to combine and throw off the 'tyranny' of the bookseller.

" Now, authors cannot combine. To begin with, it is too individual a profession ; they are often extraordinarily ignorant of business, and many of them write for other reasons than the labourer's hire. Novel writing is about the only profession into which people will rush without training, or study, or practice. *Given the talent*, which is no more to be acquired than the shape of one's nose or the colour of one's eyes, it is an Art that can be learnt, that *must* be learnt, since

genuine success can never be achieved without a working knowledge of the tools that have been given us.

“ Who would dream, for example, of making a public appearance on a concert platform if he, or she, could play or sing only by ear ? Who could expect to have a picture accepted for exhibition that had been painted solely by instinct ? Yet novels get accepted and published (never mind how !) that betray the writer’s ignorance of form, technique, and construction, not to mention the word grammar ; and though from their very spontaneity such productions may meet with an ephemeral success, that success cannot continue because it is not founded on real work. It is novel-writing ‘ by ear.’ ”

“ If prices keep up to their present level—some say they will go higher, but this I doubt because the public will not stand it—the amateur novel will stand a poor chance ; there will be more room at the libraries and at the booksellers for good work, and the standard of novel writing would rise. But if, as I have ventured to predict, prices go down, with further deterioration of print, covers, ‘ jackets,’ and general get-up, publishers will cease to fill the air with laments, readers of sensational rubbish, and lovers of a good, well-written novel will be happy ; and so will the authors.”

MRS. DAWSON-SCOTT

“A NOVEL, to my way of thinking,” said Mrs. Dawson-Scott (the founder of the To-morrow Club, and author of “Wastrels” and “The Headland”) in an interview, “is an expression of the ego of the individual writing, and an attempt to reach other minds which are in sympathy with his point of view. It is also both an expression and a confession of your own experience of life. The individual does not as a rule think as to how his work will strike others, because he feels that his personal experience must be common to humanity. It is therefore a surprise to him that he is not universally popular. The novel is a case of ‘many men, many minds.’ Each different mind produces a different thing, just as different soils produce different plants. If your experience has been small and shallow, you cannot produce great work. But your work will always be in keeping with your temperament, and people who feel very deeply and think very widely will, if they have the gift of expression, always be able to produce fine and enduring literature.

“These various methods of telling a story may be grouped into schools, but only because examples of the same method may happen to resemble one another. But if they are closely examined it will be seen that each is individual.

"I do not think the future will show any great change in the finest methods of telling a story that we have already had. We do not tell a story to-day better than Homer did three thousand years ago. Novelists are playing with their material and trying to evolve new forms, but the chief thing, after all, is to tell a story as interestingly as possible. The relations of human beings to one another and their relationship to the universal, are the things in which other human beings are interested."

I. A. R.² WYLIE

"I AM not very optimistic about the future of the novel," remarked Miss Wylie. "In fact, unless something very drastic happens I do not expect the novel will be in existence in about ten or fifteen years.

"I feel very strongly that the novelist is the direct descendant of the old troubadours, ballad-singers, and village story-tellers. Our really great writers of to-day seem to have quite lost sight of this tradition. They give me the impression of being rather ashamed of being story-tellers at all, or indeed of appealing in any way to the people for whom they are presumably writing. I think it is St. Dunstan who said 'It is better to be dull than not to be understood.' I would paraphrase that by saying that 'it is better not to write if nobody is going to read you.'"

"The really first-class writer is so afraid of being popular that he becomes afraid of life itself. He confines himself to people and incidents duller and more morbid than life really is. He seems to be afraid, in his terror of being inartistic, of the high lights and the adventure in which life really abounds. He is intensely concerned with the commonplace, as though the commonplace were in itself valuable and artistic.

"I consider that the *reductio ad absurdum* of the best authors of the day reaches its climax in the work of Dorothy Richardson. In my opinion her tendency

and the influence of the school she represents is fatal to the future of the novel, because the public cannot and will not accept this literary diet and, becoming equally tired of the trash of the 'best-seller,' ends by not reading at all.

"The two people whom I consider will rescue the novel from its present morass are Joseph Conrad and Hugh Walpole, both of whom are lineal descendants of the greatest story-tellers in our literature.

"I think that there are a number of other writers who could and did write great stories who have been affected by the virus of psycho-analysis and morbid introspection in all its forms.

"Not only is the present style of novel-writing bad for the public, but it is bad for the writers. There is nothing so easy in the world to write as a pseudo-scientific psycho-analytical novel, but a big story, well-constructed and life-like as a Vandyke portrait, is a supremely difficult attainment. Writers who attempt to write a novel without a story are really taking the line of least resistance, and as a consequence they become facile and slipshod.

"I think, in the first place, that a novel must tell a definite story. It must be true to life, not as a photograph, but as a great portrait is true to life. A great writer must be able to select his material in such a way as to give an appropriate form to the section of life which he has set out to describe. Absolute sincerity is of course a *sine qua non*. I think also that a great writer should be a poet at heart, and above all things that he should have the power to hold his readers either through joy or through pity and terror."²

MARGARET PETERSON

“ I THINK it would be a great pity,” said Miss Margaret Peterson in an interview, “ if the women writers succeed in ousting the men in producing fiction, because I think that women are only just beginning to develop their creative art. Women are too personal in their writings and rely too much on the reproduction of their own feelings in their books.

“ Personally I do not think that fiction should be propagandist in tendency, but that authors should write either because they are tremendously interested in life or because they are themselves inspired by some great ideal.

“ The real object of a story is to please rather than to instruct. Love remains the greatest interest that you can bring into a novel, but by love I do not mean a psychological study of sex. I believe that the reading public are simply hungry for the love-romance which is the flowering of life, and I think it a pity that many writers of to-day should lay such stress on the crude impulses of humanity, while omitting so much of the beauty which lies dormant in every human soul.

“ Fiction has a future full of promise before it, because people are everywhere reacting from the stress and strain of the war and its effects. They crave for

romance, in the widest meaning of the term. And whenever a real need is felt, it must produce its own fulfilment.

"We must remember that in the cinema, authors have a formidable competitor, as the cinema does much to supply this hunger for colour and interest in what are otherwise rather grey lives.

"I like to take as my motto Kipling's lines :

'No one shall work for money,
And no one shall work for fame,
But each for the joy of the working ;
And each in his separate star
Shall draw the thing as he sees it
For the Master of things-as-they-are.'"

RALPH STRAUS

“THE novel, of course, has a splendid and full-blooded future before it,” asserted Mr. Ralph Straus.

“To-day we are in an uncomfortable, unsettled period—a lean period for artists. To-day the various gentlemen who help to build up, in a physical sense, a novel—the compositors, and the pressmen and the binders and the packers and the people who watch these gentlemen doing their jobs—take all the profits from the sale of a novel. (Publishers *never* make money from novels ; they will tell you so themselves. And the novelist doesn’t matter very much, does he ?) But even if affairs become worse, and the author is obliged to hire a calligrapher to write out a copy or two of his work to be handed about in the good old way ; even if the calligraphers strike, or the art of making pen-nibs be lost and the work has to be delivered to subscribers in some queer cinema-guise, the novel will prosper.

“And history will repeat itself, for success will come to the writers of both the very good novels and the very bad novels. Nobody has ever really agreed about the scope or purpose or delimitation of the novel, but everybody knows that it cannot be created without rules. The great artist creates his own rules ; the

lesser man follows those already laid down. This will continue to happen and, were I to hazard a guess, it would be that the chasm separating the good and bad novels of the future will be greater than ever before.

"I shudder to think of the very bad novels to come. They will sprout in their thousands and will differ not at all from their predecessors. The same old plots will be used in the same old ways. The villain may be heavily disguised but he will be there right enough, and the hero may be falsely accused for more than two hundred pages but he will win through in the end. The poor, pretty governess will be goaded into stealing the wicked earl's will until Doomsday (when, one supposes, such legal documents will be no longer required) and the young viscount will marry the governess in the penultimate chapter. The police will continue to be baffled, and new Tarzans will flourish. No, the very bad novels will not alter in essentials at all. And the reason is simple enough. Mr. Beresford has already explained it. What does the great reading public ask of a novel? It desires nothing more than to be temporarily removed from its rather disappointing surroundings. It wishes to fly into a dream world differing in detail from, but fundamentally akin to, its own dream life. It has the choice of a self-created phantasy or the printed page. And it is not unimportant that such day-dreams should be, as they undoubtedly are, primitive and exciting. The average popular novel is, and will continue to be, primitive and exciting. More often than not it is a very bad novel. It will follow the old rules very slavishly. It will not attempt to teach or enlarge humanity's outlook or find fault with the old moral values. It will not make its reader *think* too much. It will just tell a story.

"The great novels to come, however, embrace a far more difficult problem. Only a presumptuous

man would care to say very much about them. It may happen that the psychological analysis, so popular to-day, may be found to be only a small and not the most interesting part of life. It may be that the finest interpretation of life will depend primarily on the objective treatment of a given theme. Whatever happens, the great novels of the future will be truly creative, forerunners that impel their readers to high thoughts. That 'form' about which the experts so amusingly wrangle may exhibit a plasticity wholly beyond present day taste. But the chief thing that will matter is the writer's own genius. If this be great enough, form, language, story or theme—all become secondary affairs.

"And there will always be somebody to publish such books"

PAUL TRENT

"I THINK that the development of the novel will be greatly affected by the increasing importance and value of the film rights," said Mr. Paul Trent. "It is only within the last few months that any British film producer has been able to put a novel on the screen and retain any of its atmosphere. Many screen-editions of novels written by well-known English writers have been produced in America, and I venture to suggest that the writers have bitterly regretted that they have ever been beguiled to give their consent to the productions.

"I recently attended a dinner after which Stephen McKenna made a speech in which he hailed the company which was producing his novel as a philanthropist, remarking that the fees that he had received were 'money for nothing'—the idea in his mind being that he had written a story purely and simply as a novel, for which he had been duly paid, and that the film rights were more or less a gift.

"I have seen recently trade shows of many British novels produced in this country, and the improvement is most marked, especially in the case of the Ideal films, whose programme of production for this year includes novels by George Meredith, Arnold

Bennett, Oscar Wilde, Compton Mackenzie, and Stephen McKenna. These are authors whom no monetary consideration could tempt to allow their books to be presented on the screen unless they were convinced that it would be artistically done.

“With the majority of authors the monetary return must be a consideration. The cinema is practically in its infancy and I think its development will be very rapid. The ‘movie-habit’ has already been acquired by millions, and, as pictures improve, it will increase. The war augmented the sale of cheap editions of novels, but this demand has not been sustained; perhaps owing to the cessation of the demand from the trenches, but I think more owing to the increased attendance in picture houses.

“Therefore I am most decidedly of the opinion that the author who must have an eye to his banking account will write with three-quarters of his eyes fixed on his film rights. In consequence, he will first of all have to tell a story, and his novel will not be able to consist chiefly of character analysis and more or less morbid reflections. This will tend to develop the novel of romance and action to which Anthony Hope has alluded. And this, I suggest, will be to the good of the reader. In these days of worry we all want to be taken happily out of ourselves. There never has been such an opportunity for the new writer to start out on a fresh line, such as Hope did in ‘Ruritania.’ Unfortunately, I do not think that the publishers will give much chance to an unknown author, and I cannot blame them, as owing to the increased cost of production their venture has become much more hazardous than before. A few years ago, the sale of a few hundred copies at nominally six shillings each was profitable, but I understand that, with the higher prices, a bigger sale is necessary.

“I prophesy with diffidence that, within the next three or four years, our ‘popular’ writers will be work-

ing directly for the screen, and that the novel will follow the film version.

"I was speaking to one of the heads of the big film producing companies in this country, who told me of a book, written by an American and published in the States, that was practically unknown until the 'picture' version was produced, and since then nearly a half-million of this author's books have been sold on this side.

"Unless the author is a Croesus, he must consider the possibility of the filming of his story, and if the result is a diminution of the rather morbid, analytical, realistic output of recent years, I think it will be all to the good."

ANDREW SOUTAR

“THE novel of the next few years must be instructive as well as entertaining,” wrote Mr. Andrew Soutar. “The price of material and labour has reached an unprecedented height, but I think that the reading public and serious-minded novelists will be grateful if it rises still further, since it will dam the flood of cheap, pernicious, pornographic stories that nowadays pass for ‘Art.’

“Some people talk about the ‘New School’ of authors, from which much is to be expected. My experience is that every five years a ‘New School’ is founded, but the result is always the same. Young men with corrugated brows and dope-saddened eyes write what they call a ‘sex-novel,’ making a freer use of obscenities than did the school immediately preceding. They attract each other, these young men (and young women). I am told that they meet at each others’ flats and read their works aloud. They hold a regular Durbar of mutual worship when one of their novels has been banned by the libraries.

“Take all the books written during the last ten years, and you will not find one that approaches within an age the beauty of a simple story like ‘Lorna Doone,’ the exquisite handling of domestic life to be

found in 'John Halifax, Gentleman.' Old and simple books (there are many others), yet they are selling to-day as well as ever.

"What I mean by the instructive novel is that story which, while preserving a well-knit plot, is informative in its descriptions of the background against which the plot is laid. The author will not be allowed to say that his heroine jumped into the train at Charing Cross and rushed off to Monte Carlo. He will have to describe the route, and the people among whom the heroine may find herself. If the author is compelled to send any of the characters to Russia, China, South Africa, or any other part of the world, the reader will demand a faithful, no matter how brief, description of the locale. In short, the author must know what he is writing about, apart from the constructing and developing of the plot.

"Personally, I have been closely identified, both here and in America, with the film play. I was told over there, and have been told here since, that the cinema is killing the novel. I don't believe it—although it is undoubtedly true that the novelist is sorely tempted, in shaping his book, to keep in mind the chances of disposing of the cinematograph rights. Thus, there may be a tendency to write a story that will fit the film rather than give way to natural impulses and write the story that the heart dictates.

"Figures are more convincing than homilies. Nowadays, a novelist must sell at least ten thousand copies of his book before he can say that it has paid him to write it. (I know that the 'New School' will put me on the rack for daring to suggest that novelists write for money: I used to attend that school twenty years ago, but I soon tired of it, because one was expected to learn so much on an empty stomach!) In the old days, before peace broke out, the novelist who sold five thousand copies at six shillings was regarded as a striking success. It is a happy man or

woman, to-day, who can make a thousand pounds a year by novel-writing.

“ The cinema, however, has altered the whole situation. In New York this last summer, I came across case after case of the film rights of a book being sold for ten thousand dollars—£2,000 normal. I have known ten thousand dollars to be given for the film rights of a short story. I ask you, in face of these figures, is it to be wondered at that novelists are shaping their books towards the screen ?

“ In defence of the screen (it has many hostile critics, especially in the ‘ New School ’) it has to be said that the sex story is the very last story that it wishes to consider.

“ The novel of the future, as you call it, must be one that will *help* the reader rather than pander to an unhealthy palate. The novel of ‘ breadth ’ should be one that will help to rob life of some of its fears, and death of much of its sting. The warm-hearted book that leaves you thinking that you’ve just had tea in a sweet-smelling, whitewashed country cottage—hot tea with cream and toasted scones, and an old lady in a white cap to pour out the tea—that sort of book will never lack a market.

“ The sound mystery novel, so long as it is kept clean and plausible, will be selling when the prurient stuff from the ‘ New School ’ has been repulped. I like those stories of adventure in mythical kingdoms, which Anthony Hope inaugurated, and which David Whitelaw has so ably continued, in, for instance, ‘ The Little Hour of Peter Wells,’ and ‘ Princess Galva.’ Whitelaw’s descriptions of Europe, by the way, are not based on what he has read. Anyone who has travelled can tell that. I know that on one occasion he went to Prague in order to be faithful in his description of a certain scene that was dealt with in only one chapter.

“ Finally, I am convinced that the humorous writer

will be in the van for many generations. The writer who can make us laugh deserves his circulation.

"I was in conversation with the editor of the 'Saturday Evening Post' (Philadelphia) last year, and he confided in me: 'We never commission a story by anyone, but there is one writer who would tempt us to break our rule, and that is P. G. Wodehouse.' Well, I hate reading fiction of any sort, but I have a confession to make: I have read a story by Wodehouse no fewer than three times, and I have laughed as heartily at the third reading as at the first."

DION CLAYTON CALTHROP

“ I do not think that any writer is of any value unless he is first of all a story-teller,” said Mr. Calthrop. “ And a poet is also a story-teller. The average young writer does not read widely enough. Writing is absolutely united with the other arts. Writers ought to meet painters and go to their studios. As a writer is using humanity as his tools, and not pen and ink, which is merely the accident of writing, he ought to experience I think, every kind of emotion that he can lay hands on —because he has got to dissect it. He ought, that is, to believe in God, fairies and police-courts—the whole of life, in fact. And he must never lose his sense of wonder ; so that the arrival of letters in the morning is a daily miracle, and not a daily commonplace.

“ I think the finest test that a man can give his work is to see if he can interest a child of average intelligence for twenty minutes with a story of his own invention, because if a child finds him dull, so will the rest of the reading public.

“ My favourite mottoes are : ‘ There is no fun in the emetery ; bring me my flowers now ! ’ and ‘ The world may appear to be a world of facts, but it is entirely governed by ideas.’

“ The moment a writer conceives of his desk as a

pulpit, he may know that he has completely failed in his mission. And he always ought to remember that hundreds of years before he was born people wrote better than he can ever hope to do. This really means that a man ought to have a library for his amusement and not for his instruction.

“ All artists are only lending the world a new pair of spectacles, just as Whistler first discovered that the Thames ran through London very beautifully, and as Jan Vermeer of Delft discovered that light of itself was very beautiful. Ugliness is only present in the world to show you how beautiful the world really is.

“ A book does not of itself belong to the author. If a man writes for his own pleasure, he need not write at all. He should write for the pleasure of other people, and lose himself in his work. Lots of books would be better if the author’s name was not on the cover.

“ Really an author is only a mirror of his age, and unless he reflects what the rest of the world has only dimly seen, he forfeits the world’s trust in him. A man is given a talent. He is only the individual who is given the use of public property. Therefore he must not lie, cheat, or swindle.

“ A printed book is a very dangerous thing, because you never know into whose hands it is going to fall. For that reason an author has no private life ; he is personally responsible for sending out printed words into the world. The author should remember, while he is writing, that if a perfectly innocent-minded boy or girl had eight shillings in their pockets and bought a book of his, he is entirely responsible for the effect of that book on their minds.

“ This does not mean that a man must write for the young person, but for the young person in himself, and people who are going to write fiction or indeed endeavour to create anything, must remember that they are

taking upon themselves a task which requires the whole of their mind, soul and body.

“ For it is the written word which differentiates us from the animals more than any other faculty we possess.”

W. E. NORRIS

“THE British novel is said to have seen its best days, and this may very likely be true,” wrote Mr. W. E. Norris. “It saw the best of them in the Victorian era and the last of them at the expiration of the nineteenth century or perhaps a little earlier. When half a dozen or more monthly magazines published serial stories and the weekly illustrated papers did the same, the British novelist, receiving a good price for his serial as well as his book rights, was, pecuniarily speaking, in clover: now he seems to run some risk of being turned out to grass, like Nebuchadnezzar. Those excellent and useful magazines are defunct; the public, it would appear, is no longer content to assimilate its fiction by leisurely instalments. Why it ever was so content is something of a mystery; but the vagaries and fluctuations of public taste are always mysterious.

“When one is invited to forecast the novel’s future one sees at once that the question should be whether the novel has a future, and that the answer must be that that inevitably depends upon whether the novel continues to pay or not. Every art which has ceased to pay is doomed to perish for that reason, which anybody who likes is at liberty to call sordid. Some artists, literary, dramatic, pictorial and musical, no

doubt there will be who will practise their art for the sheer love of it ; but in these days of inflated prices and unbridled taxation the vast majority simply cannot afford to be so luxurious, and if they are unable to make a living by writing novels they will utilise their brains in some more profitable way.

“ We are told that the novel is destined to be extinguished by the film, which subserves a much more lucrative industry, and in so far as the film is the novel’s competitor, its richer rewards would doubtless give it the upper hand. But does the film compete with the novel ? To my sense the two things are so distinct that neither can offer itself as a substitute for the other. Their affinity begins and ends with the fact that both are forms of relaxation. Hunting is a form of relaxation, games are a form of relaxation ; one resorts to them, as one resorts to novel-reading, in the hope of escaping for a time from the manifold worries of existence. One man wants to go out hunting, another thinks he would like to read a book by the fireside ; it is not because the former’s horse has dropped lame, while the library has failed to provide the latter with his desired book that they can agree to change places. Personally, I am rather fond of reading novels ; yet, in the not unfrequent event of my being unable to get hold of one that interests me, it does not enter into my head as an alternative to go out in the rain and visit a cinema show. I should prefer to fall back upon the newspapers. As a matter of fact, I suspect that the multiplication of daily and weekly newspapers constitutes the novelist’s most formidable rival. Nevertheless, the novel remains so popular and is so convenient a vehicle of expression that its demise does not appear to be at all imminent. Whether out of the unceasing flood of fiction any works with a claim to rank as classics are likely to emerge is another question. The conditions, it has to be confessed, are not as favourable as they were half a century ago to

the emergence of masterpieces. The general standard may be good—it is really quite as good as it ever was—but it cannot be said that any writer of to-day arrives at incontestable supremacy. The genus may be long-lived, but its constituent members enjoy but a very brief existence. Such is the hurry and press that the British novel, like the British battleship, begins to be obsolescent from the moment of its launching. There is perhaps a danger that even the most capable author will not trouble to put his best work into a production so ephemeral. On surveying his completed job, he will be apt to shrug his shoulders and say that, although it might have been a great deal better, it will do for its fugitive purpose.

“ Possibly, with the spread of education, coming generations will demand quality rather than quantity, and, should that demand be made, it is pretty sure to be met. We see what the actual public asks for, and what it asks for is obviously not literary distinction. But it appears probable that novels, good, bad, or indifferent, will always be called for and always produced. Thus one reaches the conclusion that the novel in this country has a future, but what sort of a future time alone can show.”

UNA L. SILBERRAD

WHEN asked for her opinions on the future development of the novel, Miss Silberrad replied as follows :

“ On the subject of the future of the novel someone said to me the other day that it was reasonable to expect the taste of the future would be the same as the taste of the best educated, in the broad, not the literary sense, of to-day. I am bound to say the man who expressed this hopeful view was unable to say what was the taste of the best educated of to-day.—So am I.

“ You see, in novels there are what I call Critics’ books and People’s books : also Superior Persons’ or Elect books and Best Sellers. The divisions rather overlap one another perhaps (except, of course, Superior Persons’ books and Best Sellers.) Which really represents the taste of the best educated, in the broadest sense, I am not prepared to say.

“ Personally, I think all four classes will remain with us, education and my hopeful friend notwithstanding. There will, I expect, be Best Sellers in the future as to-day. Not the same as to-day ; the life of a Best Seller is not immense ; those of our youth are now somewhat as ‘ the snows of last winter ’—some irreverent moderns may even say, like the snows, they have turned, to slush. To-day has its own Best Sellers, different, but possessed of some salient characteristics

in common with the past ones : the future, I rather fancy, will also. Those of the future will no doubt be different, but, unless human nature changes very much indeed, they will have some points the same,—unimpeachable sentiments, and plenty of them,—a strong love interest, a tendency to present the upper and upper middle rather than the lower classes (not necessarily with flawless accuracy), and to take the world and their public and themselves *au grande sérieuse*.

“ I think, however, there may be more difference in what I call the Superior Persons’ and Elect novels of the future. For one reason, exclusive ideas and fashions have a way of becoming general and commonplace after a time, or else going out of date and looking rather like paper flowers and ball-room decorations in daylight. Also Earnest Youth, which makes up the most important part of the public of those books, grows older and—reads detective tales and the Victorians, or something else unesoteric.

“ The Youth of to-day is of necessity different from the youth of the last generation—which, by the way, was different from the generation before, though one is apt to forget that sometimes. It is reasonable to expect that the Youth of to-day will want different novels, different ‘gospels,’ different ‘seers.’ I think it is quite likely it will have no use for 400 pages of analysis of one character ; or for expositions in story form of the ambiguities of the divorce laws, or the details of sex instincts. I should think there is but little doubt it will demand new novels and have new points of view ; I will not venture to say what ; but it will almost certainly demand and secure them, and break away from old fetishes and proclaim new geniuses.

“ But the novels produced to that demand will not be the whole of the novels of the future ; unless the future is very, very unlike the past.

“ After all, Youth is not the only novel reader ; there are the middle-aged and the old, the busy folk and the

leisured, the lonely and the commonplace, and the thousands who just want People's books. I rather fancy there will be People's books in the future as in the past ; novels that tell a tale ; deal with life pretty much as it is ordinarily, leaving something to the imagination, and with a leaning towards the sunny side and the side of righteousness ; that have something of laughter in them, and sometimes tears, and always a touch of romance, historical or homely, of love or work or adventure—there are all sorts ; it always seems to me romance lies rather in the point of view than the facts. People's books have it in all sorts.

“ For my own part, I think there will always be novels of that kind, as there always have been. Not perhaps a fortune for their writers ; those who want and read them do not make much noise about it or advertise their favourites very greatly. The publishers do not make such a tremendous lot out of them, I am afraid, at least only very occasionally. But more than one second-hand bookseller can tell you of five and twenty and thirty shillings paid for shabby copies of novels fifteen years forgotten by the literary ; not by collectors, but by just ordinary people who knew and loved them as friends.”

MRS. ALFRED SIDGWICK

“MANY years ago,” wrote Mrs. Sidgwick, “a great foreign actress told me that she was sorry she had not been born English. I asked her why, and with evident surprise at my stupidity, she pointed out that if she had been, she would have had the English speaking world for her audience. Even in those days, the English-speaking world was a large one, and it has been growing ever since, and is still growing. For instance, I found each year in Italy that English was the fashionable language. Since the war it has ousted German. Therefore Italy should soon become one of our many markets, and learn a little more about us than it knows now: for in the summer of 1920 I saw nothing newer in the hands of Italians than ‘Misunderstood,’ while in the bookshops of a great city like Genoa modern English literature was represented by a few writers whose names I had never heard and have now forgotten. I am told that English is fashionable in Germany too, but I cannot vouch for that personally.

“Anyhow there is no doubt that from the commercial point of view, if you mean to write novels, you had better be English. Having settled the question of your birth, your next step will be to choose your public, and this is less easy: for, according to the ultimate subtleties of your temperament, environment, and

education, your public will choose you. Once upon a time there was only one reading public and that was a small one. Most people had to listen to their stories being said or sung by bards and minstrels. But to-day all kinds and classes can read and they know what they want. This fact and the fact that the English language is overrunning the globe must affect the future of the novel, because markets must affect output. Those 'best sellers' that some of us cannot read will have bigger and bigger circulations, and, as long as they are not evil, good luck to them. I know a true story of a popular author whose works were to be found on every bookstall and in every kitchen. The most amiable and harmless of men, he was reproached by some curmudgeon with writing sugary slush, 'But I do my best,' he pleaded: and explained one secret of his success. There is no greater mistake than to think that a man not born to be a 'best seller' can make himself one with his tongue in his cheek. The great heart of the public will find him out and cease to beat for him. In the English-speaking world of to-day there are publics of all sorts and sizes: and good work is sure of recognition, although it will naturally not have as wide a sale as the mediocre and the melodramatic. For it seems unreasonable to admit that the greater portion of the public, high-born and low-born, is half educated and yet be surprised and angered by its choice of books.

"At the same time the spread of knowledge tends to specialisation. You have to know what you are writing about now; which is cramping, because most of us know so little. Still, if we are careful we need not let a colt win the Oaks, or people a desert island with leopards and kangaroos. In a sense, too, we all know more than we can ever give about the life common to us all. Hunger, love, friendship, anger, pain; who has not experienced them and who can describe their realities? But of such stuff the novel must be made

and I see in the future every sort and condition of men making it. Certainly the miner will show us as in a mirror his life in mines, the sailor will take us to sea, the dressmaker to her workshop,; but as of old, the poet and the genius, his lance tipped with flame, will take us everywhere.

“ They come wi’ news of the groaning earth,
They come wi’ news of the roaring sea,
Wi’ word of Spirit and Ghost and Flesh
And man, that’s mazed amongst the three.”

And I, being a hardened and voracious reader say—
‘ Let them all come. There can never be too many—
they can never be too various, provided they can stir
me to laughter and to tears.’ ”

E. TEMPLE THURSTON

“ I FEEL I am one of the last to be asked for an opinion on so venturesome a subject as the future of the novel,” said Mr. Temple Thurston, “ seeing that at the very outset I must admit I am not a student of the modern novel—the novel of the present—the novel as it is. How then, with any justification, can I predict its future? For the novel, almost supplanting all other forms of literature, has become the foremost vehicle in that progressive procession of thought which expresses the moral and spiritual life of a people. To forecast its future is as hazardous a venture as to prophesy what government will be in power fifty years hence, or whether or no we shall count England amongst the republics.

“ One might launch into endless speculation about the future of the novel, but one thing seems certain. The spread of education will force the novelist into wider conceptions of his subject, into a more comprehensive choice of his material than he has hitherto determined upon. Such writers as Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. Beresford, Mr. Swinnerton, Mr. Cannan, have shown us the way in this, and, where he cannot be linked with them, Mr. Hugh Walpole has added a sense of magic to the realities of life which his books have re-created.

“ It is, I believe, in this sense that the future of the novel offers most prospect, if not necessarily hope, of evolution. And this is no more than saying that I believe people have lost much of the sense of the magic of life and will in time regain it. The novelist, unless he is a genius, will be there to record it. I assume I am not called upon to foretell what any genius may do. He is before his time and after it. He is the sudden voice of all time and speaks when he must. The novelist, the painter, the musician, they speak at regulated intervals, just as the spirit of their time dictates.

“ To venture any opinion, then, upon the trend of modern thought is to predict what the future of the novel may be, and this it seems to me is the tendency of human emotion which is the motive power, the pounds pressure throwing up the fountain spray of all thought. Human nature is not crying out to ignore the realities of life, but eagerly it is seeking for some illuminating translation of those realities into a more beautiful meaning to existence.

“ The modern novelist—and this, I believe, is why he has no grip for me—allows but a poor meaning to life. The future novelist has all scope here, if but the trend of thought and higher idealism so happen to dictate for him. I hope I do not offend him—the novelist—when I persist he is no more than a servant of his time—a recorder. For as one looks at the growth of the novel it appears significantly beside the growth of journalism. One has only to pick up any present-day newspaper, with the prominence of its murder, suicide and divorce reports, to realise that one can distinguish but a dirty meaning to life, and such meaning as there is, the novelist is bound to reiterate.

“ I do not mean to infer that the novelist is the product of modern journalism. In defence of myself and others I would declare he was better than that. He is, it seems to me, the poet, the man of letters

turned reporter, with that self-concealed, self-ennobled ambition to give the public what it wants.

"What a future there is for him in his novels, to come up out of the muddy levels of Fleet Street and, if in that locality be his dwelling, do no more than climb up to the parapet of St. Paul's!

"For it is extraordinary how different is your vision as step by step you mount higher to a higher view-point. Doubtless the journalist must remain in Fleet Street. His printing presses are there with all their importunate clamouring for new and ready material. One can hear the sound of that machinery in so many of the novels that one reads. No poet ever heard it. A man of letters, like G. K. Chesterton, can sit in a Fleet Street tavern, oblivious of the grinding of its wheels, waving his pen about in the air in time to the tune of his own fancy.

"I am asked, and so I will say, that this might be the future of the novel, that it should recapture the poet's vision together with that grace and reverence for the language in which he writes, which is the virtue of the man of letters."

E. F. BENSON

“ POSSIBLY a fine novel may have a purpose,” said Mr. E. F. Benson. “ A purpose need not spoil a novel, if it only acts as a spur to the author’s own imagination. But the reader ought to be quite unconscious of it.

“ When anyone says a novel is ‘ true to life,’ you may expect to find a very tedious work. No one wants a novel to be true to life. Take *David Copperfield*. There is hardly a character in the book which bears the slightest resemblance to a real person. But that is why they are all bubbling with literary reality.

“ Take the best biography ever written, *Boswell*. With all the immense detail about *Johnson*, he would hardly make more than a minor character in a novel.

“ Books have been getting longer, duller, and more true to life every year, just as if the author confused the real with the actual. He traces the plotting history of some group of bores; . . . They are not flesh and blood, but cold meat. . . .

“ A novel ought to distract you. After reading anything worth reading, real people should seem shadows, lacking the reality of fiction. Most novels to-day make you feel that you have been paying a series of dull calls. If a novel doesn’t amuse you, it fails as a novel. . . . (Take ‘ *Vanity Fair*,’—We all

leave out Amelia and Dobbin, and turn on to more *Becky Sharp*). . . . And the author *must* be amused at his own puppets, or they will assuredly not amuse anybody else.

“The great crime is dullness: we have no moral sense (or should have none) when reading a novel. We are amused and entranced with Mr. Squeers, who must have been a very cruel gentleman, and fall in love with Fanny Squeers.

“The great misfortune at the present moment is that publishers are shy of new writers, owing to the prices of paper, etc. We only get the works of the old hacks who have been at it for ten years or more.

“There are some slight signs that the public are jibbing at the sermons. Humour, satire, fantasy, are attracting more notice. You may write about people who live in country villages and are engrossed in minute affairs, but these minute affairs have to appear as matters of transcendental importance, not because they are, but because they are humorously presented.

“Millions of excellently written novels, with every grace of style, every device of technique, are all quite unreadable, in spite of their impeccable grammar. They are swamped in actuality, and have not one bubble of reality about them.”

JEFFERY FARNOL

“ I THINK that judged from our modern standpoint the great authors of the past are very wearisome, unless one is in the psychological mood to turn over endless pages of their lucubrations,” said Mr. Farnol.

“ The modern idea is directness, both of thought and of action. Everything points to the fact that the older and fuller one’s experience gets, the less time one has to devote to the byways of life and art. Hence, if I have a thought to tell, I tell it in a poignantly appealing and as direct a fashion as I can. Of course there are times when one wants to create an atmosphere, when one is at liberty to do so in a round about or direct, mystic or material way, according to the attitude of mind the author wishes his reader to adopt.

“ That is one of the reasons why I think that a certain type of American picture producer has struck the right note, strangely enough, by choosing music, both before and during the picture-show, which will help to stir the beholder’s imagination through his senses. The idea of an atmosphere is to my mind one of the most essential things in any constructive or creative work. And of course, first and foremost, above and beyond everything else, the author must be sincere.

“ Creative art is at the same time the most selfish

and the most utterly unselfish thing there is in the world ; selfish in that no true artist will ever suffer anything to go from him, or from his pen, that does not please and satisfy himself and his judgment, irrespective of censure, praise or ridicule ; and unselfish, from the fact that in creating, self becomes entirely forgotten and merged in the accomplishment of the work the artist is engaged upon.

“ Inspiration for the writer is in itself a thing so utterly nebulous and indescribable, that there is an awful lot of humbug talked about it. I have often despaired of rounding out to its true proportion some idea which I have wished to incarnate in my characters. I have waited for days, sometimes weeks, for an inspiration. Though, on the other hand, I think that determination to overcome the difficulty, backed with sheer hard work that refuses to be baulked by high-brow ideas, will ultimately win through—and the result is what is called inspiration.

“ I believe that as man progresses, he loves more and more to be appealed to through his intellect, but as long as man is human he will love best the book that appeals to his heart.”

GORDON CASSERLY

“THE novel certainly has a future,” said Lieut.-Col. Gordon Casserly in an interview. “Other brands of literature may die, but Fiction will remain as long as the human race endures. The time may come when poetry will cease to charm a world grown too prosaic, books of travel be no more written in an age when every corner of the globe will be known to all, when the working man will fly from his home in Kent to his daily task in New York and spend his week-ends in Central Africa or Thibet. Scientific books may be penned no more when Science will have no marvels left unrevealed. But while Man is Man—even truer, while Woman is Woman—Fiction will endure.

“Probably the first romancer was Adam—when he explained to Eve why he stayed out at night. The Cave Man, scratching his hairy hide, forgot to gnaw his bone as he listened enthralled to the novelist’s forerunner. I have seen in Eastern bazaars from Cairo to Pekin the circle of fascinated hearers grouped around the Teller of Stories. And Present joins Past, West meets East when the errand-boy devours his shocker and the milliner’s apprentice reads her fourpenny novel in the tube.

“Fiction began with the human race; and it will

only end with Mankind. To the end of time the woman will seek in it the romance that is ever dear to her sex and that perhaps has been denied to her in real life. And men as well as women will always turn to it for relaxation after work, for oblivion in unhappiness, for amusement in an idle hour, whether it be in the form of words flowing from the lips of a bazaar teller of tales, or the printed page. Those who suffered years of misery in prison camps, endured the monotony of service in dreary desert or frontier posts, or lay weary months in hospitals, will never forget what a godsend a novel, any novel, was to them—when they could get one

“ So to the end fiction will hold its own. To the dweller in drab surroundings, the toiler in dull, monotonous work, it opens the gate of Fairyland and transports them to new realms where Romance and Adventure await them.

“ But a time may come when the novel in book form as we know it may be found only in museums. The marvellous apparatus that will replace the gramophone and the cinematograph will tell a story to the ear, and show it in moving picture to the eye, of the fortunate successor of the novel reader of to-day.

“ Will the fiction of the future be better than ours? Undoubtedly. As superior as the masterpieces of Dickens, Thackeray or— (here insert the name of your favourite author) are to the dull novels of the eighteenth century.

“ Cleaner too. English women-novelists who, while living blameless lives, are yet responsible for the majority of the novels in our language to-day that have immoral or sensual tendencies, will, as existence for women becomes freer, broader, learn to give up the writing of purposelessly morbid or unhealthy books on sex-questions and sex-relationships.

“ Probably the readers—should I say, the read-to?—of the future may demand more from the novel than

they do to-day. They may ask, not only to be amused, but also to be instructed, desire to learn something worth knowing, to add a little to their stock of knowledge. We can see a tendency to this in the growing distaste of the cinema-goer to the stupid film.

“The Novel as we know it, came late into English literature, but it came to stay.”

JOHN COURNOS

“THE art of the Novel has a brilliant past ; a hard, transitional present ; a magnificent future,” remarked Mr. Cournos.

“The past can speak for itself.

“The present is hard because it is difficult for an artist brought up in the pre-war world to adjust himself to the after-war world. In a world in which nothing happened the petty existences of people were interesting ; in the new world, in which big, stirring events happen every day, petty affairs must necessarily find their proper place, become submerged. I, for one, cannot understand the novelist who makes a great ado about the opening or the shutting of a window, or the buying of a packet of pins. The vast design of life takes cognizance of fleeting impressions ; but these in themselves do not make life. This absurd obsession with the infinitesimal particles of life is a part of the common disintegrating processes experienced to-day by the great human community. The novel, as well as life, is dominated by values of inflated currency. Psycho-analysis is another disintegrating factor in the present-day novel. Art, it has been commonly admitted, arises from the sub-conscious in man, from man’s repressed energy, for which art is one of the

outlets. The new science presumes to make conscious what is naturally sub-conscious. This constitutes a real danger to art, as it tends to kill spontaneity, by placing all human emotions on a medico-scientific basis. If a poet were told that he writes his poetry not because of great natural emotions but because of his grandmother's suppressed criminal instincts, he would not want to write poetry any more, but more likely be moved by a desire to kill his grandmother. For the artist it is more profitable to taste of the fruit of the tree of life than of the tree of knowledge. The artist who surrenders to science destroys his art. As the Great War has proved, the fate of the worshipper of Juggernaut is the fate of the worshipper of the Machine. Of late I have repeatedly reflected upon those profoundly prophetic words of Blake : ' Science (*i.e.*, knowledge), the tree of death. Art, the tree of life.' Their meaning is peculiarly significant to-day.

"The future is full of promise. An art which is destroying itself is making a place for a new art, just as the life which is destroying itself is making place for new life. After destruction there is much to do. The chaos is great, and order must be created. The artist, above all, loves putting things in order, creating harmonies out of chaos. Life has been abundant these recent years, and abundance in life makes for abundance in art. When life is lacking, artists go in for pure forms, for 'art for art's sake.' But a rich art can only come from rich materials. The history of man, the history of art, support me in this. Man's adventure is always reflected in his art 'The history of art is the history of man,' says a great Frenchman, Elie Faure, whose work should be universally known. Phoenicia, a commercial nation, left no art. Great novels will be written as soon as men can get their proper bearings after the typhoon. Perspective is always essential to an artist for a tranquil judgment of the human adven-

ture. The heroic, striving figure of man will then resume its natural place on the literary and artistic horizon. My only regret is that I belong to a generation that was born too soon."

G. COLBY BORLEY

“I THINK that the future of the novel depends very largely upon the novelist’s ability to liberate himself from its present and its immediate past,” said Mr. Borley, the author of a promising first novel, “The Last Horizon,” published by Messrs. Methuen. “I use this latter term advisedly, to cover a period of half a century or thereabouts—the period of the so-called Reaction against Victorianism.

“I have no wish to deny the intrinsic greatness of this period in English or in European literature. Much of its achievement was magnificent—within its limits. But it was fatally self-centred, peevish, and inexpansive; intoxicated with its own peculiar ideas. And it was pervaded and perverted by a certain fixed idea which I am going to call the Dogma of Disillusion.

“It started during the seventies and eighties, when all sorts of people seemed to be discovering that the world of the Mid-Victorians was full of make-believes. Just the same might fairly be said of any particular generation, notably of the very generation which made this discovery. But these critics were far too cultured to know much about history or the past. Being equally ‘shaky’ as to logic, they speedily jumped to the conviction that

life itself is a make-believe. Hence the militant Dogma of Disillusion. All the intellectuals of the day became disillusioned because they were jolly well determined to be disillusioned. (Matthew Arnold should be excepted—he was a rational Disillusionist). The thing developed into a fashionable intoxication. So long as Mr. Hardy led the rout it preserved a sort of melancholy beauty which, in the hands of Mr. Conrad—the nearest approach to a 'live' man amongst the Disillusionists—has culminated in grandeur. But, with the coming of Mr. Shaw—the evil genius, if genius he can be called, of contemporary English literature—the entire cult degenerated. The attitude of dignified unhappiness gave place to the grin of contempt—a sophisticated contempt of nearly everything that is elemental in art, of passion, of romance, of action and adventure, of science, of poetry itself. The Younger Novelists followed, and there was a tussle between this so-called 'Shavian Commonsense' and a sort of hectic reaction. But the 'note of disillusion,' sounded exultantly at every impressive opportunity, is always the common chord of reconciliation.

"What is the reason of this depressing unanimity? The explanation is tolerably simple. We have only to glance at that extraordinary middle-class intelligentsia which has largely controlled the development of the serious novel in England for the last thirty years. You will find it in its most rarified shape in the intellectual suburbs of Chelsea and Golders Green. It has somehow evolved a culture which is totally divorced from education. Indeed, it will often tell you quite openly that its only concern is with literature and art—meaning the literature and art of the last fifty years. It has swallowed the various cant and foibles and shams and 'disillusions' of that rather stuffy period so voraciously that it seems to have lost the open air altogether. Its men, and

more particularly its women—and most of all, perhaps, its poets and novelists—are much of a kind with the peasant of Northern France who never dreams of setting foot beyond his visible horizon, and asks you gravely if Abbéville is very much smaller than Paris.

“ Now I think that the future Novelist must learn to ignore this hothouse Intelligentsia. That much is vital. And he can do with a great deal less culture and a great deal more solid education. Above everything else, the Dogma of Disillusion must go to the scrap-heap. Art, like science, is naturally an adventurous business, and it cannot long subsist on passive impulses. Indeed, this modern attempt to harness the creative spirit to the mood of resignation and ‘disillusion’ is one of the wildest paradoxes of an age that has been superabundant in paradox. But if we want to escape it we must get right away from the later nineteenth century.

“ Some will tell you, no doubt, that the way of escape has already been discovered by the Futurists. But the Futurists are in truth, the very extremists among the Disillusionists. They are so very disillusioned that they have despaired of beauty and expect us to ‘will’ a new sort of ugly beauty for ourselves—a beauty that is only accessible to the intellect. They are the poorest among the paradox-mongers and about the most unhealthy.

“ I believe that we may find a stronger and better inspiration from the greater human achievements of the present age. There is the tremendous fact of a War which everyone has experienced—which has thrown the life of every civilized individual against a universal background of unprecedented lights and shadows. There is the lesser, yet still stupendous, fact that men have crossed the Atlantic and the Pacific in flying-machines. The Disillusionists

and their novelists do not notice such things. They are still content with the Village Novel (after Thomas Hardy), the Novel-about-an-Artist, the novel of the unhealthy schoolboy or the undesirable school-girl. But the novelist of the future will have to wake up, or he may find that even the Intelligentsia are ahead of him."

EDWIN PUGH

“FOR many years,” said Mr. Edwin Pugh, “I have been trying to like the cinema, and wondering all the while why I could not. Its reproductions of real fine stories are of course abominations of desolation. But I have often laughed at its simple humours, and been even a little stirred by some of its more thrilling dramas. And yet it has always been the same. I have always come away from the cinema feeling somehow depressed, almost with a sense of horror.

“And a little while ago I discovered why this was so. There is no life or colour in the cinema. All the scenes are painted in the same sad sombre tints. All the actors are corpses, gruesomely galvanic, ghastly in their uniform pallor and dumbness.

“And so it is, or so it seems to me, with most modern novels. They too are without life and colour. The characters do not talk to me like men and women of flesh and blood, but mouth at me dumbly. They behave, not as human beings behave, but as puppets set in an artificial light, doing artificial things, feeling artificial emotions.

“The literary merit in the average modern novel is high. Many of them are extraordinarily clever. There is wit in some of them, though humour is far

to seek in most. They are skilfully, deftly, often brilliantly written. And yet they seem all to suffer from that fatal lack of what I will call in default of a better word, humanness. They group themselves. There are 'sob' stories, the wild life stories, unreal stories of the Tarzan type, stories of an occult, mystic flavour, and—worst of all!—closely-wrought studies of people, real enough but wholly abnormal. There are, of course, many other brands of modern novel, mostly conventional, but these I have stated should serve our purpose well enough.

"Now there is hardly a living novelist, except perhaps among the women, who does not derive from Dickens. And Dickens, as in his own day, is still supreme among English novelists. He is still the most widely read of novelists; which is to say that in every grade and order of social life there are thousands who still find enjoyment in his books. And I think that the secret of his power lies in his dealing with types rather than with individuals.

"The old wearisome charge against Dickens that his characters are not so much types as caricatures has long since ceased to interest me. He made them live, anyway. Even those who may never have read a line of his works are always quoting from them, unconsciously. This is inevitable because Dickens grasped the fact that though no two men are exactly alike there are groups of individuals who do closely approximate to one another. He welded each of these groups into one colossal figure and so created for us a handy symbol for them all. And he treated great national institutions, such as the Circumlocution Office, in precisely the same way.

"Therefore the future of the novel seems to me to consist in the revival of these great traditions. The novel of the future must handle things and people, the humours and the dolours of life, its pains and triumphs, and above all its ideals, in the same massive

style. It must be spacious and leisurely. It must be long—the longer the better, and it must reflect not one phase but many phases of the human comedy. The future novelist must not be afraid to let himself go. Never mind incidental mistakes ; all masterpieces are crammed with mistakes ; it is only mediocre work that is faultless.

“ The nearer it approaches the robustious methods and free gestures of the past-masters in fiction, the further it will get away from the colourlessness, bloodlessness, and deathly silence of the cinema.

“ And it might even be issued in weekly or monthly parts at the various prices of admission to the cinema.”

MARWIN DELCAROL

“ THERE are three main forms of novel,” said Marwin Delcarol (author of a striking first novel about Reincarnation, ‘Fire and Water’). “The first is the novel designed purely for amusement and relaxation. The second reflects knowledge, thus providing vicarious experiences. And the third mirrors some philosophical or artistic ideal which the author wishes to convey to the public. A great novel ought to combine at least two of these aspects, and should never be untrue to the author’s conception of life.

“ I think that the novel of the future must take into consideration the study of those wider planes of consciousness which humanity is gradually and painfully learning to conquer. It is probable that spiritualism and modern psychology will play much more vital and inspiring parts in the future, when they have divested themselves of their present sordid and illusive trappings.

“ Fiction when it has not represented the truth has done a great deal of harm. For instance, by creating impossible ideals it has been responsible for an enormous number of unhappy marriages. The fiction of the future will have the same responsibility, and should therefore realise the important function it plays in setting standards and creating new values.

“Whatever else it may be, fiction must be creative. It must create ideas which are both essential in themselves and essential to progress. Otherwise it may lay a dangerous emphasis upon things which have no universal value and which are merely isolated examples of a capricious fantasy.

“I do not wish to imply that the term ‘reality’ should be limited to the accepted experience of even the majority of mankind. What may appear nonsense to some, may nevertheless be perfectly real and the mainspring of life to others. And if we desire to extend knowledge we cannot afford to neglect any aspect of truth.

“The aim of the novel of the future should be to make life as a whole accessible to each individual, and thus to give to all the material out of which to construct a new conception of life.”

CHARLOTTE MANSFIELD, F.R.G.S.

MRS. CHARLOTTE MANSFIELD was the first woman to lecture in Rhodesia in 1909, the subject of the lecture being "Ward Pictures." Besides two books of poems and a book of travel ("Via Rhodesia") Mrs. Mansfield is the author of nine novels. She is the only white woman who has penetrated into certain parts of Africa, and has met with many adventures in the course of her travels.

In a recent interview, Mrs. Mansfield remarked that the African native who has remained uninfluenced by Western civilisation, is one of nature's gentlemen. For months at a time she has travelled alone with a group of natives, some of whose parents were cannibals, through the most inaccessible regions of Africa, hundreds of miles distant from any civilised centre, and never once has she had cause for complaint.

When invited to express her opinions on the future of the novel Mrs. Mansfield said she did not think that the full value of the novel for propaganda purposes had yet been realised.

"There is a likelihood," she continued, "of novels being more classified in the future. I say novels, not novelists; for the writer who can only create one kind of novel is sadly lacking in imagination,

although repetition may mean popularity for a time and a good bank balance.

“ Because the basis of life is love, the chief reason for the existence of novels must always be the interest or curiosity human beings have in the love stories of other human beings, but in addition to a strong love interest, the better educated, or the more highly inquisitive, will require not only a love story but also forgotten history, little known geography, or psychology of exceptional humans, described so that one may study life in a palatable form and without great expense.

“ Kings and queens as an institution may pass away (though I sincerely hope not); Governments may fall; women may become judges of the Supreme Court, and men may yet advertise for engagements as nursery men, not of the agricultural or horticultural order; but let the surface of life change as it will, the novel will never pass into oblivion until love is dead and this earth passes into a state of nothingness.

“ Which writers will live in the future? Those who have hearts as well as brilliant minds. This discussion is of novels and novelists, not of playwrights, otherwise I would feel inclined to illustrate what I mean by saying Shakespeare will live for ever, Shaw will not even be remembered fifty years hence (except perhaps by a few dilettantes); Dickens will live, Oscar Wilde will not even be quoted.

“ One may be amused or entertained for a few hours by certain writers who are merely *contrary* in order to provoke comment, but as no one really cares if their heroes or heroines live or die, so no one will mind when the hands that weave these unnatural romances are for ever still.

“ Any writer, to be remembered, must suffer while writing, must feel laughter with the merry and weep bitter tears with those who grieve; readers may mock at the affected, simpering miss of yesterday,

or the fire-eating, whiskered hero of the day before, but real tragedy and genuine comedy know neither time nor age. The past, present and future of deep feeling is the same for all generations, though clothed differently, and makes its imprint on the annals of life and literature, never to become that which is not.

“ This being so, the responsibility of the novelist is very great. It is not enough that one is a ‘ best seller ’ or a ‘ success ’ amongst the cultured few. Each writer in striving for the ideal and the strength to sincerely accomplish that ideal legitimately, may, with each drop of ink, help to tint the future of the world’s history in such a way as to compass the space twixt earth and heaven and, in a measure, bridge the great abyss.”

F. BRETT YOUNG

“ To begin with,” wrote Mr. Brett Young, “ it will be as well to decide if the English novel has a future of any kind. Members of the literary coteries who instruct our taste now spend their time in prophesying its demise, and as all these clever young men not only write novels but read them and review them, they are probably better informed on the subject than an author who lives out of the reach of new books and has never reviewed a novel in his life. For all that, I am prepared to back my opinion that the novel will survive, if only on biological grounds. Like all persistent organisms it is blessed with the power of adaptation. In spite of the nonsense that has been written about the form of the novel, it is not, and never has been, an art-form of a set type. The people who pontificate in the reviews as to what a novel should be, might read, with advantage, de Maupassant’s preface to ‘Pierre et Jean.’ Originally a defence of realism as practised by himself and his friends, it gives a complete answer to those critics who are perpetually pestering English novelists to imitate the distinguished foreigners who, in their opinion, possess the monopoly of ‘form.’ It states, to begin with, that the novel, which, in this country

has already usurped part of the provinces which once belonged to the essay and the epic, may contain anything that its author chooses to express in accordance with his personal conception of art ; that there are no rules for writing novels, and that all the enlightened critic or reader asks is this : ' Make me something beautiful in the form that suits you best according to your temperament.' The man who is going to give us the novel of the future is not in need of this advice. He will do it, and those who are not deafened by the shibboleths of the moment will hear him.

" The second reason why I believe the English novel will survive, is that it is a form of artistic expression particularly suited to our national genius—that it stands already on the basis of a great tradition, and that English novelists, for all the discontent of contemporary writers, have produced during the last two hundred years a greater body of significant work of this kind than any others in Europe. This is an age of speed ; but that is no excuse for impatience or hysteria in criticism. Great novelists are as rare, almost, as great poets, and not even the greatest can be relied upon to produce a masterpiece every few years. Nor will criticism hasten the production of masterpieces by being in a hurry. In his proper time the next great novelist will come.

" So much for the future of the novel. As for the shape which the novel of the future will take, one cannot speak with the same confidence. One thing at least is sure. We need not be dependent for our models on—I quote from Max Beerbohm's essay on Luntic Kolnyatsch—' the seemingly inexhaustible supply of anguished souls from the Continent—infantile, wide-eyed Slavs, Titan Teutons, greatly blighted Scandinavians, all of them different, but all of them raving in one common darkness, and with one common gesture plucking out their vitals

for exportation,' for this fare has become rather monotonous and the English palate is tired of it. Gloom and strength are not, after all, synonymous ; Freud (if he is necessary to our salvation) is better read in the original than in the form of fiction ; and though the high-brows who scotched the Repertory Theatre have done their worst to inflict their convention of drabness on the novel, I think they have failed. In the same way, minute descriptions of storms in suburban and provincial tea-cups do not seem likely any longer to thrill men and women who have weathered the tempest of war ; and along with them, I hope, is gone the finicking absorption in technique with which the poverty of their material and their real unimportance was, sometimes skilfully, concealed. For an adulation of extreme technical accomplishment is, after all, a *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon in Literature, and to-day we believe we stand at the Beginning of an Age. The novelist of yesterday had enough technique and to spare. What he needed was a richer and more varied experience of life, and in these years of war, God knows ! men have lived as fully and as vividly as did the Elizabethans. They have seen human souls and bodies bent beneath insufferable stresses ; millions of them have known strange countries and seen, mingled with the filth of war, new and amazing beauties in sea and air and land. The men of the generation that is going to write the novel of the immediate future have suffered ; for them the horizon of life has been terrifically expanded ; and the fruits of their suffering and their vision will be seen in their work. The novel will gain in colour and in action : things from which the critics of ' before the war ' shrank with a kind of false shame. No doubt the new novelist will be accused of violence, sensationalism and vulgarity by those whose vision is limited by the radius of the District Railway ; but these accusations will not deter him from writing

of the wider (not merely geographically wider) aspects of beauty that he has seen ; and, in doing this, he will have become the unconscious instrument of the Romantic Revival which follows, as day follows night, every critical, non-creative period in the history of Literature. I have no gift of prophesy ; but this is what I believe will happen. As to the commercial future of the novel, I do not know anything. I wish I did."

LOUIS GOLDING

“It must be difficult,” said Mr. Golding, “for a novelist who has already perfected himself in a technique and definitely mapped out a line of country as his own, not to allow his own achievement to control his attitude towards the general future of the novel. It will be difficult for him to resist feeling—if he is a novelist, let us instance, of ‘locality,’ such as Mr. Hardy, Mr. Phillpotts or Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith—the novel will takes its course until every ‘locality’ has its novelist. Thereafter the literary spirit must invent new forms. The last novel will at length have been written.

“I am of course far from suggesting that this is anything like an actual or conscious intellectual attitude with such novelists as I have mentioned, or even with novelists with more illusions and less craft than they. I wish merely to suggest that so intensely is a good artist following his own path that unless he is extremely circumspect he will tend to mistake it for the broad high-road.

“For this reason, therefore, I think it is necessary to divorce oneself, in a consideration of the future of the novel, from the cult of one’s own place and time. The novel, after all, is not a sporadic manifestation

unaccountable to laws. It occupies as definite a place in the history of a nation's literature as the rude chants of its barbarian originators. A literature would seem to begin with the lyric, to pass by way of the drama to the novel, and it is my conviction that it attains its literary consummation in a synthesis of the 'lyric-spirit' and the 'novel-spirit' (cumbrous though these words be) so that the beginnings and the ends meet. Such evidently was the nature of the Greek and Latin developments—from the lyric to the drama and thence, in the magnificent, if corrupt flowering of their worlds, the novel. Precisely such a masterpiece as the 'Satyricon' of Petronius, a work so arrogant in its intellectual splendour, marks the synthesis of the primal lyric and the ultimate novel. Surely it was because neither Greek nor Latin literature was historically allowed to fulfil its whole development that so little of this 'literature of finality' was achieved.

" For the fact seems to be that the artist in the early stages of a national literature is composed of simple elements, is a creature of sharp, uncerebrated processes ; but that the artist, as his race matures, combines at length the emotional simplicity of the poet with the intellectual fulness of the novelist.

" This general identification between the poet and the novelist has been of earlier fruition among the French than among ourselves, as in all their developments they are, if the word is not offensive, more precocious than we. Even in the last century almost all the novelists were poets, apart from the realistic school of Zola, who himself did not disdain to write a novel in bad poetical prose. The names extend from the supreme instance of Hugo to Gautier and Paul Bourget, Catulle Mendès and Henri de Régnier, and a host of lesser men of our own days.

"It is as interesting to remember that Anatole France and Blasco Ibañez began as poets as to recollect that Gabriele d'Annunzio remains both. In England we had to wait for Meredith and Mr. Hardy before we witnessed great novels and great poetry achieved by the same men. Their predecessors in the novel were definitely, howsoever distinguished, prose minds fulfilling prose conceptions. Dickens, in his attempts at the poetical sinks into the maudlin, Charlotte Brontë into the insignificant; Thackeray is too wise to try. But following upon Meredith and Mr. Hardy, intermediately we meet Mr. Kipling, Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton, then their successors, Mr. de la Mare and Mr. Masefield, until at the present moment the identity between the poets and novelists becomes more and more evident. The names of Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, Miss Rose Macaulay, Mr. Thomas Moult and Mr. Edward Shanks rise at once to the mind and the greatest of his own generation, it may well be, in both arts, and in whose hands I should most feel the future of the novel to rest, the author of 'Sons and Lovers.'* America, it is to be remarked, is at the beginning of a literature and presents among her poets only the names of Mr. Anderson and Mr. Cournos as additionally distinguished in the sphere of the novel.

"I do not imagine that the poet-novelist will tend, *tout simple*, to incorporate his own poetry, as such, in his novels, though there is no artistic canon to prevent him. For the practice indeed would be a pretty revival of the traditions established by Sidney and Lodge in the Elizabethan novel. But it is indubitable that at the least his practice of poetry will give him that fastidious command over language which is only learned through this ardent and arduous discipline; at the most he will be competent to deal with those essential emotions which are common

* D. H. Lawrence.

to all men, but which he, a poet, has the faculty of expressing, with an architectonic power and a co-ordination of his visions which will be the further gift, conferred by the novelist in him, to the great synthetic art at which he is labouring."

“ LUCAS MALET ”

“ IT seems to me that, if the novel is to be worth anything, it must reflect the thought and the whole tendencies of its own day,” remarked Mrs. St. Leger Harrison (“Lucas Mallet.”) “ There are only a few stories. We re-tell them perpetually, but we re-tell them as modified by immediate social, moral and spiritual conditions.

“ I think that there is not sufficient leisure at the present time to produce very good literature in the form of the novel. But I think that when conditions are stabilised again, which they must be if civilisation is to continue, leisure will return and then we may get the literary novel of the past, but it will be literature in harmony with the new conditions.

“ Just at present we are tired, both emotionally and physically. What the people now want is a form of story-telling which will amuse and soothe, and a little excite them. Five to ten years will probably elapse before any one stream of tendency sufficiently declares itself to create a positive school. And until then I think we must just have patience with the situation, and each writer must work on his own lines without bothering. The event will declare itself.

“ There appear to be two distinct strains at present.

Firstly, a rather gross realism, and secondly, excursions into purely imaginative and romantic regions, showing strong spiritual instincts. As an example of the latter strain, one may mention Lord Dunsany, for whose writing I have a most profound admiration. These strains might develop into two very definite schools. But one must bear in mind that we are not yet out of the wood and that further social and economic complications may arise which would have a profound influence on every form of art.

“ Meanwhile, the film is certainly exercising a bad effect upon much of the popular fiction. Authors are writing with one eye on the cinema, in hopes of the enormous profits which the cinema alone can give. This leads to scamped and crude work, as the film is, after all, still in its infancy and is designed to appeal at present mainly to the semi-educated mind.

“ In the present chaotic state of things it is a very hopeful sign for the literature of the future that writers of great distinction in style such as Conrad, Maurice Hewlett, Edith Wharton, and among the younger men, Hugh Walpole, command an increasingly large and devoted public.”

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

“ So much depends on circumstance,” said Mr. De Vere Stacpoole. “ If, for instance, things go on as they are going now in Europe and America, it is possible there mayn’t be any novels very soon, or only those written by Trotsky, but if Europe survives herself, the novel will, in my opinion, take on a new lease of life, and the novel of character and action will look up again—it has been under a long time. When was the last alive literary character born ? Even historical types like Sherlock Holmes, Captain Kettle or Raffles, seem wanting in existence. The Hall of Fictional Literature is full of voices but there’s nothing moving about much in the way of figures, either alive or mechanical. There is, of course, Mr. Salteena—but he was born a great many years ago—I’m awfully sorry, I mean a few years ago.

“ I have also in mind Peter Jackson, cigar merchant. Peter is, anyhow, enough alive to make one take an interest in him, he moves about a lot and takes you with him. Frankau has a tremendous lot of kick about him, like Hergesheimer ; he has something of an affinity to the man who wrote ‘ The Pit,’ ‘ The Octopus ’ and ‘ Slaughtered.’ He is one of the buds, I believe, of the new spring that will give us books

again of the sort a plain man craves for, books that don't strive after literary effects ; books related to everyday life, not as it is lived in boudoirs and circles ; books that emit stories of little snuffy souls sniffing their upward way from school-boy-hood ; books with punch in them.

"Punch brothers, punch with care—what am I saying ?—my mind was wandering towards all the ticket collectors I will have to face between here and Bordighera, and the problems of excess luggage, for I have several of the newest books in my luggage and they aren't light, and the baggage weighers won't deduct a halfpenny, even if I swear there's nothing in them*. Why do I take them ? I take them for the very same reason that made me buy them—one must have something to read. I expect that very same reason to keep the libraries going, and it supplies an answer to your question, 'Do I think the novel form will cease to exist.' No. Unless civilisation is destroyed in the next few years—or ever. People must have something to read now that they have acquired the habit, they do it automatically and by the million. It's less like reading than grazing. The great herd has found its way into the field of Fiction belonging to farmer Mudie and farmer Smith ; habit and hunger will keep them there, no matter how poor the grass may become—but habit chiefly, the habit of automatic feeding. Cattle eat, less from hunger than because the sight and smell of herbage starts a mental clockwork going which keeps on till it runs down."

* Mr. Stacpoole was just about to leave Europe for the Continent.—ED.

BARRY PAIN

“ IF you will tell me the novelist of the future,” said Mr. Barry Pain in the course of an interview, “ I will tell you what form the novels will take. No one, for instance, could have foretold Dickens. Dickens was not the product of his age. It would be more true to say that the age was a product of Dickens. There is a parallel to that in another art—in painting. It has already been noticed that the women of the eighties tended to resemble the paintings of Rossetti and Burne Jones.

“ I do not think that any novelist will deliberately look around and see what the popular requirements are, and then set himself to meet them. If he did this, his lack of sincerity would be obvious and his failure would be complete.

“ I do not think we shall see much more of the ‘sex novel,’ as it used to be called. In the nineteenth century, which was the century of propriety, most novelists were ignoring at least one-third of human life. This produced a reaction, with the result that we got a minority who dealt with nothing but that one-third ; which was unsatisfactory.

“ The novel of the future will be written with much greater freedom and also with a better sense of pro-

portion. The sex question will fall into its right place and will neither be suppressed nor exaggerated.

"If commercial considerations affected the novelist at all, he would in the future be very careful to limit himself to the work expected of him.

"I think there is a great increase in the taste and the intelligence of readers. When people begin to read, very crude stuff appeals to them first, but this phase does not last. The more people go on reading, the more difficult they will be to please, and this, of course, is a factor of improvement.

"I should like to say just a word on obscurity in style. We do not hear so much of Thomas Carlyle and Robert Browning as we used to do. They are to some extent, I think, paying the price for their intentional obscurity. Much as I admire the novels of Meredith and the later novels of Henry James, I am not sure that they will not suffer from the same cause. Obscurity is not originality, but it is often used to call attention to originality. The only pardonable obscurity is that which is inevitable from the depth of the thought. It is much more difficult and much more valuable to write lucidly than to write obscurely. I do not think that we shall see much of intentional obscurity in future.

"There will probably still be fashions in fiction, but they rarely live more than ten years. The lilies of the æsthetic eighties are as dead as the green carnation of the decadent nineties.

"Whether romance or realism is to prevail, depends, I believe, solely on the writers of both. Any novelist who is sufficiently able can choose his subject and manner of treatment and even impose them successfully upon the reader.

"Literature is a little bit like the Great War, and also a little like the weather. It cannot see more than twenty-four hours ahead. During the whole course of the Great War, I do not remember that

anybody prophesied anything that subsequently happened, and I am pretty certain that if I gave a detailed and prophetic account of the novel of the future, I should subsequently be glad that it was published in a daily paper, and so not likely to be remembered."*

* NOTE.—This interview was one of those which first appeared in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.—ED.

HUGH WALPOLE

"A NOVEL seems to me quite simply a business of telling a story about certain people whom the writer attempts to make as living as possible," said Mr. Walpole.

"Probably behind the lines of these people there would be some philosophy of life either stated definitely or implied in the attitude of the author.

"It seems to me, therefore, impossible for the novel ever to decay or change fundamentally, because human beings, so long as the world lasts, will be always interested to read about other human beings, if they can believe in their existence. It is this bewitching readers into believing in the existence of people whom they know do not exist that is the novelist's business.

"It does not seem to me to matter by what means the writer tries to bring off his spell. He may try in the most modern psycho-analytic method or in the old eternal story-of-adventure method, or in the simple, straight-forward life-as-it-is-lived-day-by-day method. Any weapon is permissible if the effect is produced.

"Human beings, for the most part, prefer to be encouraged about life, and, therefore, quite naturally, the story that offers such encouragement will be the more popular story.

“ Certain readers, however, by much reading and a deeper study of life, want truth at all costs, or what seems to them to be truth, and something fresh to their palate. You will find, therefore, that the critic of action, whether professional or not, having read an immense amount of novels, generally applauds a novel that treats of life from some quite new angle. What he wants most from fiction is a point of view, the revelation of a personality that has never been given to the world before. But if he presses his love of novelty too far, he is apt to mistake the medium through which the characters are revealed for the truth of the characters themselves.

“ And if I were to make any prophesy about the future of the novel, I would say that many of us are growing tired of this thirst for novelty and are turning back with relief to any simple presentation of real people in a real way.

“ A good instance of this is the wonderful recrudescence of Anthony Trollope, who cared nothing about form or technique or style, and had, indeed, the smallest pretensions of himself as a novelist. But he kept his eyes fast fixed on the characters about whom he was writing, and tried to tell the truth about them as he saw them. He was indeed too deeply interested in their adventures to think about anything else.

“ And I believe that it is this kind of simplicity of interest on the part of the narrator to which we will return. I do not mean by that that all the things we have learned about the art of the novel in the last fifty years will be forgotten. But what we have learned from the French, the Russians, Meredith, Hardy, Henry James, and the others, must come instinctively through our writing and not deliberately because we want to acquire some wonderful form or technique.

“ I think, too, that we are all growing tired of

a meticulous realism which stops at that. And the novel of the future will probably permit itself more invention, more romance and more imagination.

"I think that the future of the novel will also depend a little upon the amount of encouragement that is given to its intelligent development by the press. During the last few years literary columns in the daily and weekly papers have been largely sacrificed to more urgent public affairs. The younger and newer writer has, therefore, a very small chance of getting his work known.

"There seems to me to be a quite new public that is very eager for literary direction, and that it would be well worth a newspaper's while to pay more attention to this new public and to give more space in its columns to that new public's needs."

THOMAS BURKE

IN an interview I recently had with him, Mr. Thomas Burke, the celebrated author of "Limehouse Nights," "Twinkletoes," and other books, complained that the short story, for some reason or other, is never taken seriously in England.

"Possibly the climate may be the cause of this curious aversion," said Mr. Burke. "As the English people prefer roast beef and a bottle of port to a lighter diet, they probably likewise prefer the big, lumbering, full-bodied novel of English tradition to the short story. On the other hand, in Latin countries and in America, where the climate is clear and brisk, the short story flourishes.

"Now, in England, volumes of short stories are frowned upon both by publishers and readers. If, by any chance, a man makes a success with a volume of short stories, his publisher at once turns to him with 'Now you must write a novel!'

"When, however, a novelist has made a hit with a novel, magazine editors at once call upon him for a short story. But why? An art patron does not go to an eminent miniature painter, and say, casually: 'Now you might set to work and do me a large canvas in oils in the Brangwyn style,' nor, again, does he go to a Brangwyn and ask him to do miniatures.

“ People seem to take it for granted in England that a man who can write a novel can ‘ knock off ’ a short story in his slack moments. They do not seem to appreciate the fact that a short story is the most difficult of all prose forms ; just as the sonnet is the most difficult of all poetic forms.

“ Many of the novelists of to-day might have been excellent short-story writers ; but, because the short story is regarded only as a diversion, they expand their short-story ideas into full length novels,—and consequently produce bad novels when they might have produced excellent short stories.

“ We have to-day more fiction magazines in England than ever before ; yet the short story still languishes. This is partly the fault of editors who run their magazines according to their own ideas of what may or may not be treated as a work of art. They seem to be definitely afraid of originality or the unusual in any form. An unknown author who has written a truly notable short story has to-day but one door open to him—that of the English Review.

“ Before my ‘ Limehouse Nights ’ were published in book form, I offered the stories to every popular monthly magazine. All refused them. But when the stories finally appeared in a book, and had attracted attention and discussion, an editor who had refused them previously, printed three of them, *after* publication in book form, in face of his earlier declaration that ‘ our public wouldn’t stand this sort of thing.’

“ This, I think, speaks for itself.”

Mr. Burke then went on to say that he very much more appreciated the attitude of American editors, both in regard to their business propositions and also in regard to their habit of allowing him a free hand in connection with the length of his stories and the selection of his material.

When questioned regarding his method of inspiration, Mr. Burke replied : “ My ideas ‘ come ’ naturally

in the form of short stories, and I work on no theory, except that the material must agree with the form. There must be the single situation moving swiftly and cleanly to an inevitable climax. Many possibly excellent short stories have been ruined because the writers did not know where to stop.

"To my mind, character is not an essential of a good short story ; it is the situation alone that matters. Before all, the good short story must be tinct with imagination. Hence, in my opinion the greatest of all short story writers are Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Stephen Crane, and Joseph Conrad. Of course, I know there are others—Russians, Frenchmen, and a few Englishmen—but their short stories are mostly not short stories at all, but sketches, vignettes, or photographic impressions."

DOUGLAS SLADEN

“AUGUSTINE BIRRELL once remarked to me,” said Mr. Sladen in an interview, “that there are three things about a novel which signify, namely, the subject, the style and the story—and of these the subject is the most important. If the theme and the characters don’t appeal to me, I don’t want to read the novel. Feeling thus, I always try to fill my books with the kind of men and women whom I love to meet, especially young people of the vigorous age. In ‘Mary Rose,’ for example, if I may instance a play instead of a novel, the characters of the two old gentlemen and the old lady who filled two whole scenes, though the acting and setting were simply perfection, oppressed me because they were the kind of early Victorian people from whom I should fly in real life. It is a great thing to have one’s characters young ; it gives them a chance of outgrowing disabilities.

“Most people think the story the most important thing about a novel, and without any doubt it is the great story-tellers, like the late Charles Garvice, who achieve the most astonishing results in circulations. As regards style I have only one thing to emphasise, and that is that the dialogue and even

the soliloquising of the author ought to be in the spoken language of every day, which so often differs from the written language. The most life-like stories are those which are told as you would tell them if you were introducing them into a speech. Hall Caine told me that he was in complete agreement with this view and said that he regarded me as being its pioneer.

“ I once had a very interesting conversation with Mrs. Humphry Ward about failures. I said: ‘ Why do you allow men who are failures to be the centres of your novels? It seems to me to strike a wrong note.’ She said: ‘ Mr. Sladen, I am only really interested in failures.’ This *does* strike an entirely wrong note to me. When I’m writing a novel, I seek to introduce my readers by giving the hero the biggest obstacles which are not of too morbid a nature that occur to me. I like them to seem insuperable to the reader, and to make the hero win through by sheer grit. But he must make good; his achievements must carry conviction.

“ I am rather fond of reversing the usual order of subject in one direction. It is common in novels to have a man and woman, starting young and inexperienced, and going through various experiences to lead up to marriage. I like to have a marriage which is a ghastly failure early in the book and to make the victims of it get over the consequence of this disastrous union to the satisfaction of the reader. I think that to have characters who begin with making a disastrous marriage and end by getting freed from it and being really happily married, is likely to give a much stronger love-interest than to have a story which leads up to an ordinary cake and bridesmaid marriage.

“ Another thing at which I always aim in my novels is to give them an important background of some sort. In ‘ A Japanese Marriage ’ which was published

long before the relief by legislation of the deceased wife's sister, I made this subject the background of the ordeals of the heroine. The background of 'Grace Lorraine' was the institution of a sort of college, which was half almshouse, in a restored mediæval abbey where poor musicians, artists and authors, who could not have followed their professions without such a home, were able to work at their writing, reading and composing, until they had passed a certain limit of income.

" You ask me what I think of the future of the novel. It seems to depend largely on finance. At present, unless the author makes a payment towards expenses, publishers will only publish books which they consider certain of success, independent of merit. They would rather bring out a book by an Ethel M. Dell than a book by a George Meredith—if there was a George Meredith nowadays. I think we have to find some new medium for the publication of novels to take the place of the 6s. novel, which has held the field for so many years. Advertising may solve the question. Harrods or Selfridges may go to a publisher and say: ' We require ten novels with editions of ten thousand copies each for announcing the attractions of our Christmas sales. We do not care whether you sell them or give them away.' With this subvention at his back, a publisher might be willing to bring out even another 'Paradise Lost.' To be quite serious, some new system of financing the production of novels has to be found, if the minor novelist is to have a chance again.

" As to the psychological aspect, one thing is certain, namely, that if the rank and file woman goes about saying that so and so's novels are psychological, so and so's fortune is made. It is on psychology, like a chariot of fire, that our Mrs. Barclays rise to Olympian heights.

" I really am against the introduction of psychology

into novels, unless it is the sincere portrayal of experience.

"In regard to the genesis of books, my opinion is that a book should be the outcome of an idea. When an author has finished writing one book, he should let his mind lie fallow until some text arises on which he feels a burning desire to preach. Having found his text, he looks for illustrations of it in everything which he already knows or can observe. He goes on accumulating material and inspirations until his imagination helps itself to them and begins to create. In my own instance, the accumulation period is generally a long one, but when once the creation starts, it proceeds rapidly. I was collecting material, for 'The Curse of the Nile' for as many years as it took months to write.

"The question of the creative element in art has an importance which cannot be exaggerated, although in some of the very greatest works it seems, on the surface, to be almost non-existent. There is a whole class of books which might be called photographic, and some of them are among the most treasured heirlooms of our literature. But, speaking generally, the immortal element in art, the element which made Homer the father of literature, is to generalise from the particular with convincing verisimilitude. Anyone who can achieve this has in him the makings of an immortal. But Providence has chosen some strange vessels to contain genius, and it sometimes happens that those who have this priceless gift so disfigure it by the inelegance of their handling that the evidence is lost to any eye but the true explorer's. Thus it is said that a Walt Whitman is tardily discovered and grudgingly recognised. And thus it is probable that novelists with huge circulations but no literary reputation have arrived at their public.

"You ask me what subjects I prefer for novels. In this matter I am a little contrary, for as a reader

I like one class of subject, and as a writer another class. I like the stories I read and the plays I see to be modern of the modern, coming right up to the present moment, and I like them to be about just the same young men and young women that I take most pleasure in meeting in real life. I like to meet them in drawing-rooms, at dinner tables, playing games, or making excursions. In fact, I like to meet them socially.

“ But when I am writing a book I never feel that I am giving my readers proper measure unless I give them plenty of adventure of one kind or another—it may be in military operations, which have a great fascination for me—or it may be in the perils which attend life among half-civilised and homicidal peoples. Or it may be in the perils which attend life in the wilds. But somehow I generally feel that my hero ought to take risks.

“ I like my heroines to show their grit by rising superior to prejudices, as well as by their bravery in physical danger. And this leads me to a point. One of the great functions of the novel is to educate people into overcoming prejudices. We have accepted all manner of conventions from our predecessors and many of them stand in the way of the ordinary happiness of human beings. It is the custom to call them safeguards, and to say that if we abandon them, the skies—meaning the heavens of morality—will fall.

“ I believe nothing of the kind. A man and a woman, married to each other ought, above all, to be fair and generous, behaving, as the saying is, like a white man to each other, but if they have made a mistake in marrying and can only be unhappy, the best thing that they can do is to get out of it as quickly as possible. The greatest reason of all for divorce is incompatibility of disposition—inability to be happy together. Marriage should be dissoluble

like any other contract. Make the conditions about alimony, and the custody of the children strict. When marriage is dissoluble by the consent of *both* parties, such matters are likely to be equitably arranged. I understand that the very liberal Scandinavian divorce laws have worked well in this respect, and that Mohammedans are more chary than others about divorce, because their alimony regulations are so oppressive.

“ I have one thing to add, viz. : that what I have preached in my novels on this subject I have practised in real life. I have never had occasion to use the safety-valve of the divorce courts myself ; but I have more than once recommended its use to my dearest friends, and on each occasion with the best results. As one of the greatest preachers of our day has said, . . . the incompatability of one is sufficient.”

SARAH GRAND

MADAME SARAH GRAND is now living in a beautiful and spacious house in Bath, called Crowe Hall, surrounded by a garden designed on the Italian plan with smooth level lawns bounded by stone balustrades. In the tranquil atmosphere of this delightful abode she wishes to end her days.

I was impressed by her keen mentality and her passionate sympathy with large and universal ideas, her wide compassion and understanding of human nature, and her quick response to the things that really matter, both in life and in art.

Here, one felt, was a woman who had looked life steadily in the face ; a woman who had refused to be hypnotised by convention or deceived by appearances ; a woman of noble impulses and lofty aspirations who had gladly given of her best to the world, undeterred by censure and unspoilt by praise.

And I do not think there are many writers alive at the present day of whom the same can be said.

When I asked Madame Grand to give me her opinions on the future of the novel, she replied as follows :—

“ I should say that at present it is not possible to foresee the future of the novel ; it depends on so many other factors about which there is no certainty ; but considering the part played by this branch of literature

in human affairs the question is one of extraordinary interest and of great importance.

" It is important because, whether he will or no, the novelist is a teacher ; his influence is formative, for good or for evil. If no two people can converse together for half an hour intimately without one of them having influenced the other in some sort, what must be the influence of the novelist in whose ideas readers are steeping themselves everywhere, in every class !

" Genius in fiction wields a power which is greater than that of priest, philosopher, or scientist, because more comprehensive and further reaching. Priest, philosopher, and scientist are bound to be sectional ; they are scientists, and specialisation limits their appeal. The great novelist, on the contrary, is bound to be universal ; his subject is human nature, and its possibilities, mental, moral, and physical. He shows the life of his time as it is lived ; he shows it as it might be lived, though not necessarily as it should be lived. He may use his power benevolently, to elevate, or he may use it malignly, to degrade. He may be either destructive or constructive, and he may be both at once, a destroyer of what is good or bad, and a reconstructor for better or worse. His use of his power depends on his own predilections, his appreciation of values, his sense of right and wrong. The truer his sense of ethical values the more extensive his influence and the greater his fame. For man has a sense of himself as still in the making, a sense that his growth depends on the cultivation of his better self, his highest attributes, and all the world over he honours the effort to help him.

" As civilisation advances man becomes more and more self-conscious, more and more aware of his own complexity, of a lower nature that debases, and of a higher nature that exalts. Body, mind and spirit he is, and body and mind are corruptible ; but spirit

is incorruptible, and not to be defrauded of its rights without a struggle, let him deny it as he may. His pampered body itself is prone to become the ally of his spirit. Its satisfaction ends in satiety, and, revolting against his every effort to stimulate its sensual appetites, it makes him aware of a craving, of an insensate hungering for something, something indefinite because he cannot or will not recognise its source, but all the more tormenting on that account. It is in vain that the novelist offers his wares to this miserable man in his hundreds of thousands, when his wares have nothing in them but the life he is sick of, labelled 'real life.' Deep down in himself the sufferer knows that the label lies; that what is here offered him is not real life but only the passing show. He is vaguely conscious of what is 'Beyond these voices,' of a real life somewhere, somehow to be attained, a life that grows ever more beautiful the longer it is lived. A man who is ripe for the Divine adventure is like a migrant bird, restless, unhappy as the time for flight approaches. He needs neither map nor compass, only the call. When the call comes he is up and away, in full faith, divinely guided.

"But for men there is the making ready, the ripening time. It is then that his soul sickens of the passing show, that the important craving sets in; the soul's hunger for the bread of life, the spirit's yearning to penetrate the mists that veil the goal.

"The future of the novel depends upon the novelist's response to this universal craving, his comprehension of it, the extent to which he experiences it himself, and his attitude towards it, whether he is for satisfying it, or for quenching it. Genius full grown is sympathetic insight made perfect; but genius is not implanted in any mere man full-grown. It is, to begin with, but a tender seedling which has to be nurtured, and upon its nurture depends its quality, whether it shall develop into a poisonous growth,

or whether it shall be rich in soul-sustenance. For there is an evil genius as well as a good, a genius which degrades and defiles as well as a genius which raises and purifies.

“ The history of mankind is the history of the struggle between these two principles, good and evil, or God and Devil, if you will. To the average man Civilisation and Barbarism stand for the contending forces. When he calls the result ‘ the march of civilisation ’ he means progress from a lower stage of development to a higher. In every age what little progress has been made has been determined by ethical values.

“ The greatest novelists of the immediate past, the few who have made a lasting impression, were clear and right in their estimate of ethical values. They neither juggled nor paltered with principles. Their treatment of the Eternal Verities of Right and Wrong was simple, straightforward, courageous and uncompromising. They were on the side of the angels. Tried, as in justice they should be, by the standards of their day, they come out above them, as reformers. They had a high sense of responsibility, of the weight of words, of the effect of familiarising the mind with what is ugly in thought, word, and deed. Familiarity breeds tolerance rather than contempt, and they avoided the danger. The sense in which they were limited is not the sense which would have limited their appeal. Their appeal was universal, because, whatever their faults, their work had in it that Essential Something which eases ‘ the true heart’s seraph yearning for better things,’ the craving which is a sign of spiritual growth. Because they were on the side of the angels, they moved multitudes.

“ Progress is marked by refinements, and the reaction of the 19th century novelist against the grossness of his predecessors was a striking advance. Refinement of feeling put him into possession of the

finer insight which is a concomitant of fine feelings, and he eschewed brutality as but a blundering kind of strength. As in the objective, so in the subjective world, ugliness was ugly in his sight, and beauty was beautiful. He avoided the one no more than the other when it was inherent in his subject, and he presented the contrast, but not in repulsive details. He dealt in broad effects, without offence, yet potent to impress.

“ This man was of necessity the product of the national spirit of his time, but he was not merely a mirror reflecting the facts of life as it was then lived. If he did not succeed, as later generations have succeeded, in tracing causes to their effects, he at all events made this attempt and is to be honoured as a pioneer. He probably never defined it, but in his judgment of values truth of idea was more important to him than accuracy of fact. Hence, he was interpreter as well as recorder. He interpreted the signs of the times, diagnosed social diseases, taught and prescribed, making many mistakes, no doubt, but in all sincerity honestly doing his best.

“ What immediately strikes one in considering the part played by the novel in modern life is the loss of power in the individual novelist. He no longer stands out like his predecessor above the crowd, a personality to be reckoned with among the forces that influence opinion, inspire thought, and mould character. All these things no doubt novelists still attempt, but they succeed only in a small way. There is not one novelist to-day whose work is known to the whole reading public as the work of the great 19th century novelists was known in their day ; not one with whose characters everybody is acquainted ; not one whose next book is eagerly expected and treated on its appearance as an event second to none in interest if not in importance. The modern man moves coteries ; his predecessor moved the world.

" Yet the novel has not ceased to be a power in the land. Never were there so many writers of novels and never so many readers, and all these writers are influencing their readers in some sort. But to what purpose? What is the general tendency? Is there a general tendency nowadays? There is, and it is not elevating. The crying need of these days is for consolation. One may read a hundred modern novels and not find a word of comfort in any of them, not a scintilla of spiritual uplift. The cleverest modern novelists cater principally for the sensual side of human nature; they have little or no conception of our spiritual needs. They are small in the all-important particular in which the 19th century men were great. They responded to the eternal, universal craving of the higher side of human nature for sustenance; in this respect their attitude was determined. In this respect the attitude of the modern man, when he responds at all, is indeterminate; he vacillates. Tastes differ and he caters for all tastes, but he does not thread his beads; he has no cord to thread them on. He is episodical, sectional, fragmentary, and so of necessity is his appeal. The medium of the novelist disposes him to be sectional, but it does not limit his outlook. However small his section, there is nothing to prevent his looking up out of it and beyond; nothing to prevent his appreciating the whole vast design of life and shaping his fragment so that it fits into it and adds to its beauty. No doubt attempts are being made sporadically to minister to the importunate spiritual needs of our day, but not as a rule by the strongest writers. Still, it is significant that these attempts, though they fail in literary merit, have the widest appeal; the cultivated approve them as much as the ignorant.

" To know the Eternal Verities for what they are is the crown of perception, the sceptre of genius. The novelist whose spiritual vision is obscured must

be wrong in his values, and in so far as his values are incorrect, in so far does he fall short of the glory, the glory of the lamp-tender, of the torch-bearer. His strength, when he is strong, debases instead of elevating, corrupts instead of purifying, blasts and disintegrates instead of constructing, adorning and solidifying. The perversity of talent makes for pettiness ; the perversity of genius makes for destruction.

“ As to the future of the novel ; will there be another dominant genius or will there not ? Who can say ? But if or when he appears, one thing is certain. Our modern civilisation is trembling in the balance, and the weight of a novelist of great genius would turn the scale. With what effect depends on whether he throws his weight in on the side of the angels or whether he repairs to the other camp.”

FERGUS HUME

MR. FERGUS HUME wrote as follows :—

“ I think we can divide novels into three classes ; those, dealing with the world as it was ; those having to do with the world as it is ; those conjecturing what the world will be. So far as the first and second classes are concerned, it is tolerably certain—the material being to hand—what will be written. The third class, being Utopian, depends upon the prevision, correct, or incorrect of the author, or his imaginative skill to invent futurity, good or bad according to his ideals. The first and second class deals with things in the past or present which we know from actual life or study of books ; but the third class—who can tell what kind of novel will figure in it ?

“ To my mind, no one can tell, as we are yet ignorant what form the civilisation which is now being born will take. No person, say, at the court of Louis XIV. could possibly have forecast the civilisation of the 19th century, and so could scarcely have written a plausible story thereon. The cataclysm which gave birth to the epoch which ended August, 1914, began with the American War of Independence, and its actual fighting ended with the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The world then went into the melting

pot over a very hot fire, and who can tell in what shape we will emerge therefrom. And as the novel of the future will deal with *its* present when it arrives, how can anyone say what it will portray? There will always be the novel of romance, of adventure; detective tales and problem stories; also, the novel with a moral, and religious fiction. And always there will be the central motive of love, which makes the world go round. But the surroundings, the ideas, the treatment, the descriptions, will be wholly new and of a kind which we can scarcely imagine at present, environed, as we are, by our own more crude conditions.

“ After the termination of the active struggle in 1815, it was fifteen to twenty years before the railways began the new era; that wonderful 19th century which ended in 1914. It will probably be ten or fifteen years, if not more, before the aeroplanes will inaugurate the coming epoch. Humanity only moves to the splendid goal, at which it will ultimately arrive, by means of these gigantic cataclysms; they have always been, they always will be, until the design of our Evolution is completed. Every era grows old and weary, and it is necessary that its ideas—upon which its form of civilisation depends—should be reshaped for the betterment of the world. Just now religions, science, politics, education—everything, as we know—are being jumbled up and tumbled about so that out of the old material new forms and better may be shaped. But who can say what that shape will be? We *grow* into each new epoch, slowly experimenting with many men, many ideas; shaping things this way and that, until the world arrives at a tolerably satisfactory civilisation.

“ This being so, since a novel deals with humanity, its surroundings and the thoughts, words and deeds suggested by those surroundings, I cannot see—these being wholly new and beyond the grasp of our

finite brains—how anyone can suggest what the novel of the future will be. Personally, I fancy it will deal with psychic things, more or less, as humanity is now beginning to sense the invisible. But, to my mind, it is impossible to say more. To imagine this and that concerning future fiction is about as profitable as weaving ropes of sand. But, of course, this is merely my own idea, based on the grounds I have set forth above. Others may, and probably will, think differently."

THE END.



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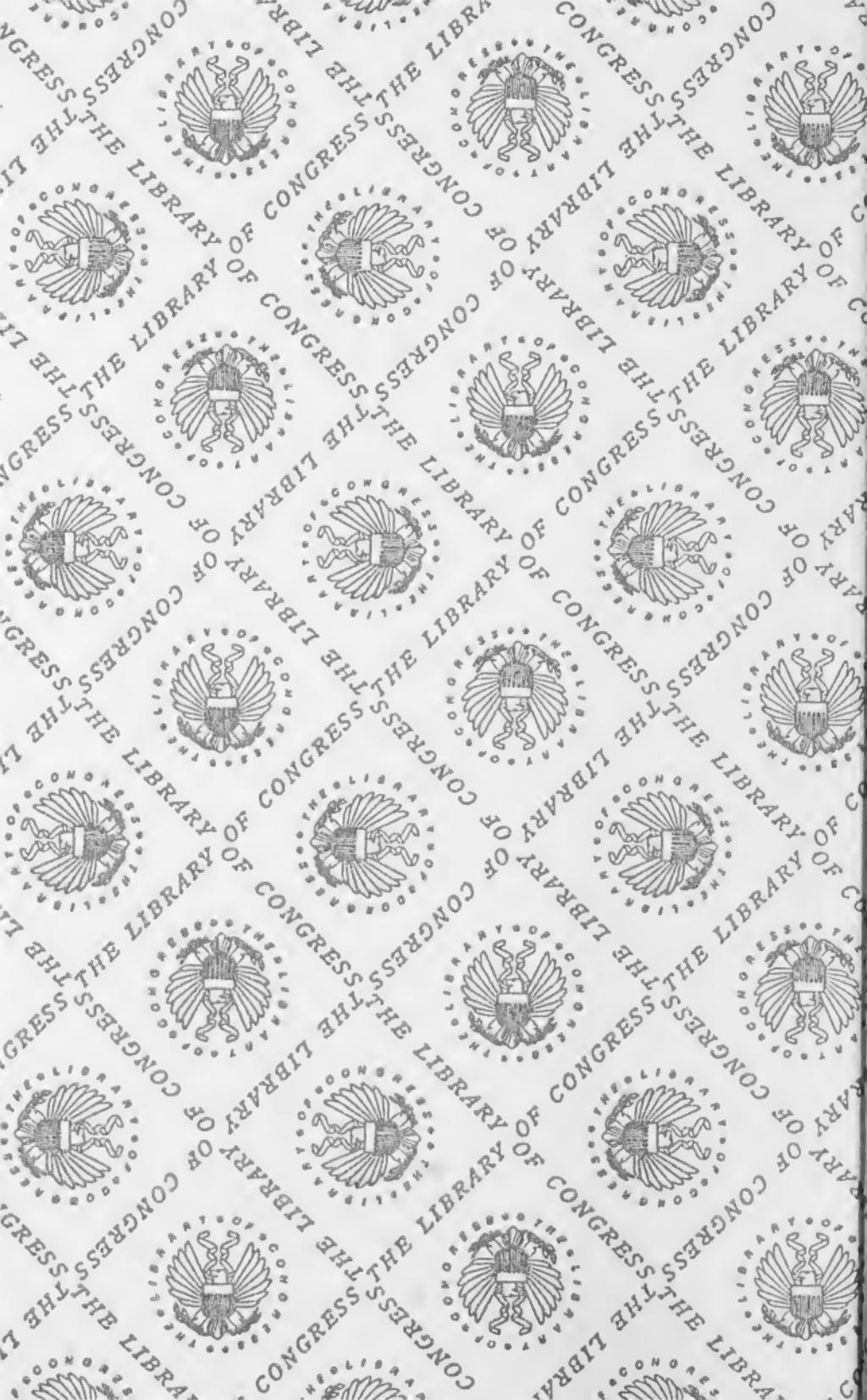
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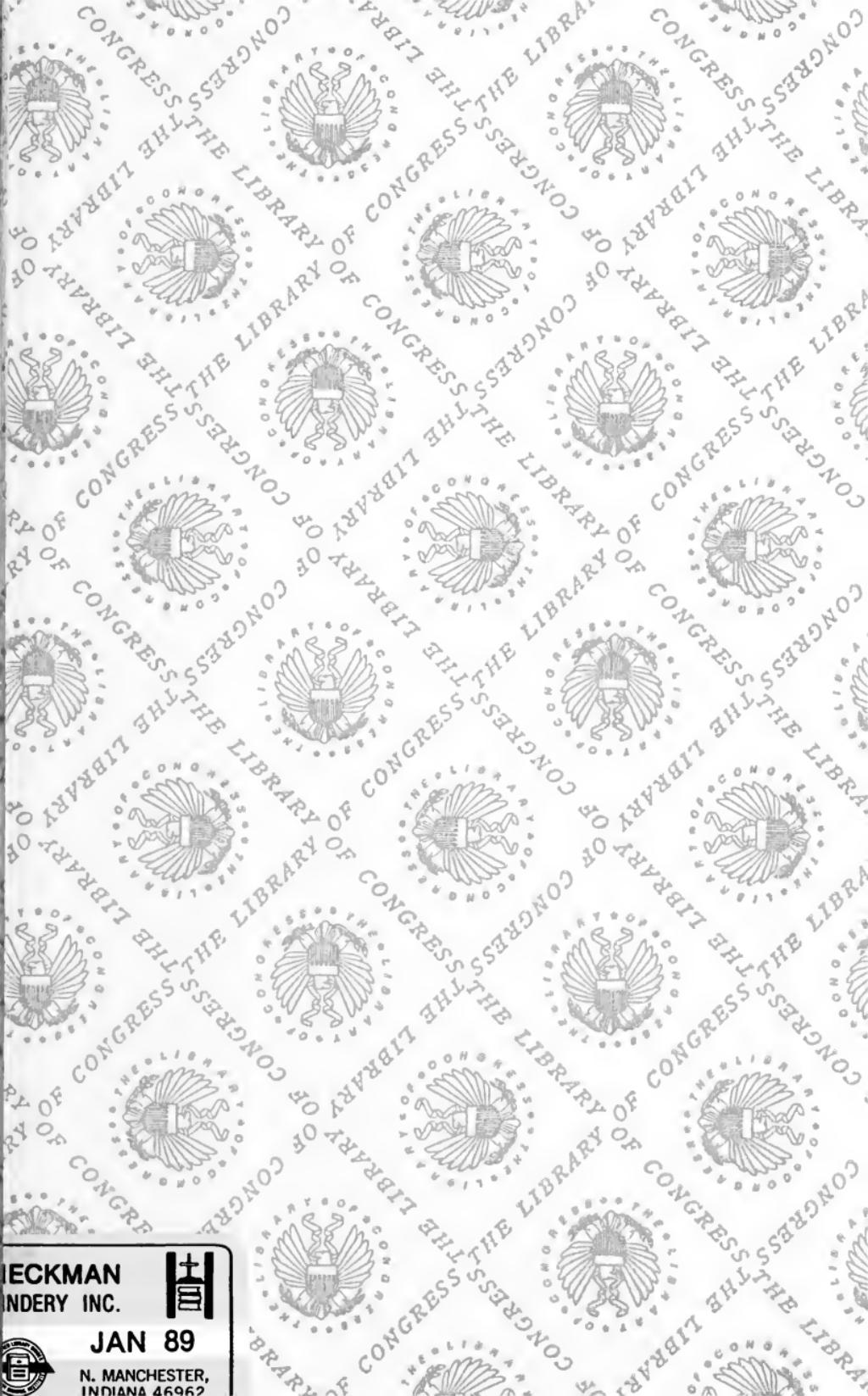
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